

THRANTAS

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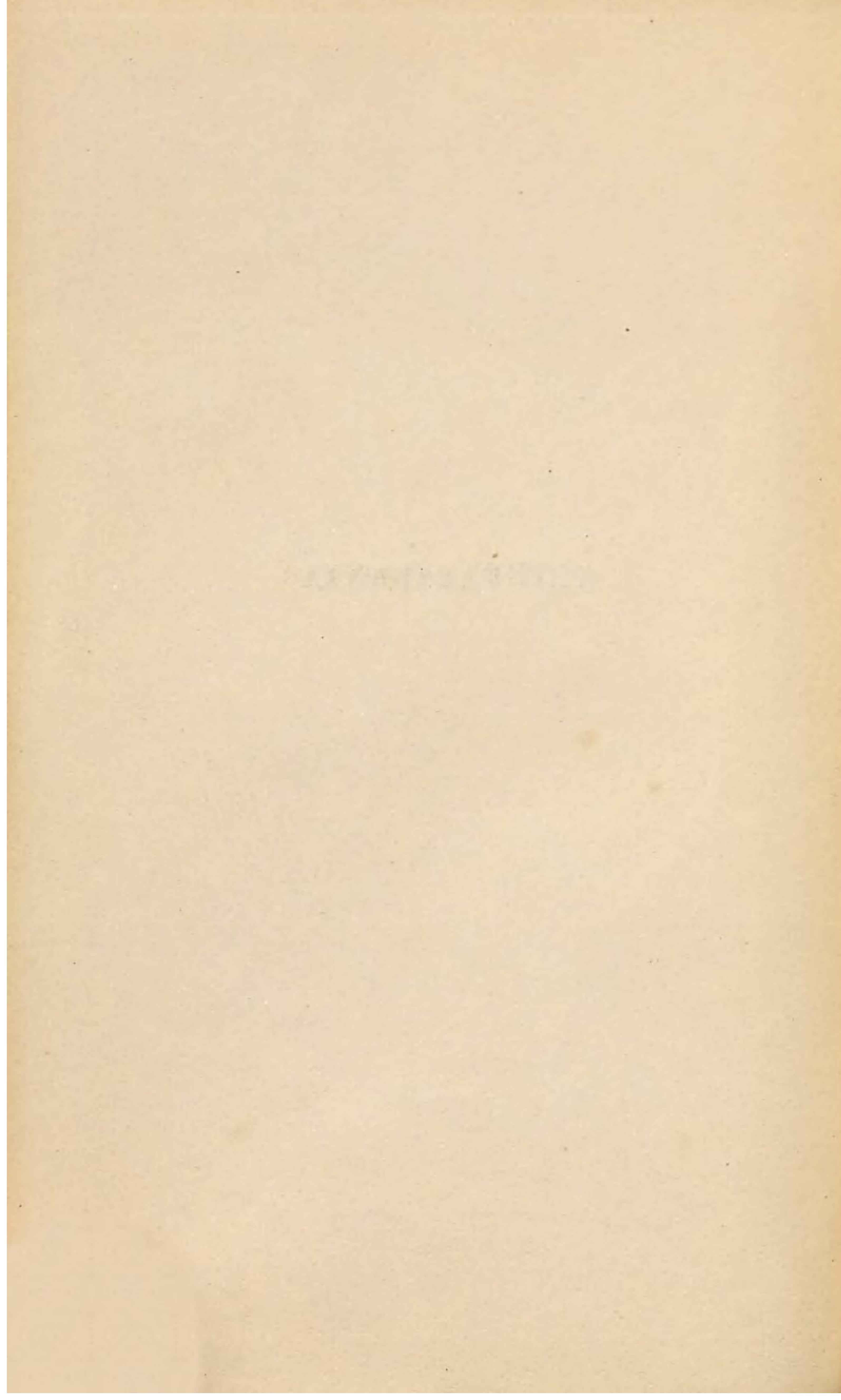
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THE TARANTAS.





THE TARANTAS..

With a View of Nishny-Novgorod.

THE TARANTAS.

TRAVELLING IMPRESSIONS OF
YOUNG RUSSIA.

BY

COUNT SOLLOGUB.

WITH EIGHT ILLUSTRATIONS.

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ADVERTISEMENT.

VASSILY IVANOVITSCH and Ivan Vassilievitsch, two worthy Russian gentlemen, who have been introduced to us by our friend, Count Sollogub, request us to present them to the English public. They are anxious to avoid all such inflammatory and dispute-provoking topics as politics, either foreign or domestic; but they believe that the social system of that considerable member of the European family of nations which is called Russia, is as interesting, as it is little known and understood in this country; and they further believe, that they are better able to act as interpreters, or showmen, of their fatherland, than are any of those foreigners who have hitherto attempted,

but, as they inform us, with very little success, to get behind the scenes of that mighty and important theatre. We can only say, for our own parts, that we heartily hope the acquaintance may prove to be mutually entertaining and profitable, and may speedily ripen into a firm and lasting friendship.

THE PUBLISHERS.

LONDON,

January, 1850.

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THE TARANTAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENCOUNTER.

VASSILY IVANOVITSCH was one day enjoying a walk on the Tverskoy boulevard.*

Vassily Ivanovitsch was a country gentleman in the government of Kazan, about fifty years old, of short stature, and so stout that you could hardly look at his cheerful rotundity without a smile. His face was broad and of a high colour, his eyes small and grey. He was attired like any other country squire: a white felt cap with a huge peak, a blue dress-coat with bright brass buttons, (the workmanship of a one-eyed tailor in Kazan, whose sign-board has for the last forty years proclaimed

* The most fashionable of the fifteen boulevards of Moscow, which together form a half-circle in the middle of the town, dividing the so-called Chinese-town (Kitai-Gorod) from the White-town (Belvi-Gorod).

him “newly arrived from St. Petersburg,”) pea-green trowsers, undulating in picturesque folds above his boots, a stock buckled by an enormous metal clasp; a glass bead watch-guard of a celestial blue colour adorned his waistcoat.

Vassily Ivanovitsch paced the Tverskoy boulevard, and smiled inwardly as he recapitulated those enjoyments which Moscow affords in so great a profusion. There is an English Club, and a German Club, and a Commercial Club, and in every one of them there are tables covered with green cloth and cards, and everywhere you may sit down and look on at the company playing high and low stakes; there is loto and billiards, with mustachio'd players, and jocose markers. Is it not quite delightful? and the gipsies, the booths, the bear-chase at the Rogojskaia barrier, the promenades in the suburbs, and the theatre!—the theatre, where such beautiful women dance,—where their little feet execute such wonderful ciphers, that you can hardly believe your eye-sight. At this thought, Vassily Ivanovitsch remembered his stern corpulent lady, left behind him in the village to superintend the household;—and he decidedly smiled as if he were a most desperate wild fellow.

At the same time there walked on the Tverskoy boulevard Ivan Vassilievitsch.

Ivan Vassilievitsch is a young man who has lately returned from foreign countries. His Macintosh came from London, his trousers from the atelier of Chevreuil, his cane was bought at Verdier's; his hair was cut in the style of the middle-ages, and his chin still showed some remnants of a Vandyke beard.

In former days, when a young man returned from Paris, he imported with him the exterior of a *perruquier*, some dazzling waistcoats, some stale *bon-mots*, a great deal of insupportable affectation, and as much decisive braggartism. Thank Heaven, all that has disappeared, though only to give place to another extreme. Our young folks have turned profound: they study political economy, trouble themselves about Russian aristocracy, bustle over the welfare of the State, and—would you believe it?—it is in foreign countries that they become Russians, aye, even too much so! they are thinking of nothing but Russia, the greatness of Russia, the faults of Russia, and they come back to their fatherland in a certain strange ecstatic state of mind, generally ridiculous and inconsistent, though excusable,

and at all events, more praiseworthy than was their former nullity.

The worthy representative of young Russia, Ivan Vassilievitsch had travelled through the whole of Europe, and while listening to the political babbling of various classes of society, scrutinising the different petty passions, which are palliated by the high sounding names of public welfare, liberty and civilisation, he detected, how great and beautiful in many a point his mother-country was, and from that time, a warm, though unconscious love for his country kindled in his heart, from that time he began to be proud of having been born a Russian. Independently, however, of this feeling, he imported with himself a most lively admiration of the Parisian Opera, and many tender recollections of Parisian suburban balls.

Thus then, Ivan Vassilievitsch was walking on the Tverskoy boulevard, admiring the dazzling dresses of Moscowite *lionnes* and the fantastic liveries of their untidy footmen, and mumbling to himself "*Nel furor della tempesta*," the beautiful air from Bellini's Opera, "*Il Pirata*." "Good God," he thought, "what a pity it is, there is so little life here.—'*Nel furor*'—it's a

different thing in Paris—‘*della tempesta*.’ Alas! Paris! Paris! Where are thy *grisettes*, thy theatres, and thy Musard?—‘*Nel furor*’—Lablache, Grisi, Fanny Elsler. Here—they ask you only what your rank is;* and as soon as they learn that you are only a government secretary, no one honours you with a look—‘*della tempesta*!?’”

At this moment, our young man perceived a strange lump in a white cap, with pea-green curtains round a pair of legs, rolling straight forward towards him. The red smiling features appeared familiar to him. “Hallo! it’s Vassily Ivanovitsch,” he thought to himself, “our country neighbour from the village of Mardassy. A capital landlord! A hen-pecked husband! I wonder whether he has lately seen my father!”

“How do you do, Vassily Ivanovitsch,” said the young man, politely bowing. Vassily Ivanovitsch stopped short, and looked at him with some perplexity. “Bah! Bah! Bah!” he at last exclaimed in a stentorian voice. “Bah! Bah!

* Every one who is in service in a civil or military capacity holds a rank, of which there are fourteen. The eight first confer an hereditary nobility on every descendant, male and female; the six others, of which, however, two, the eleventh and thirteenth, have no members, confer a personal, but not hereditary nobility, with which however they are not inconsistent.

Bah!—Vania! Vaninsha! Vanitschka!* What brings you here?" And taking hold of the frightened dandy with his enormous paws, he began to choke him with ponderous kisses, without minding the crowd of promenading loungers.

"What a scare-crow you look, brother! Pray turn round. Well—so—once more. Is it the newest fashion, this? It's a flour-bag; nothing more nor less. Ha, ha, ha! Don't you look beautiful! Very beautiful indeed, upon my soul! Where do you come from, then, in such a costume?"

"I come from abroad."

"So! and may I ask you where you have been?"

"I have been six months in Paris."

"So!"

"I have been in Germany, in Italy."

"So, so! Well! and may I ask you how much you have spent?"

"Sir?"

"How much money you have spent?"

"I have spent some."

"So, so! and what says your father, my worthy neighbour, to the matter. Old folks do

* Diminutives for Ivan, as Feda, Fedinka, are for Fedor.

not generally approve of the expenditure of young ones. Bad times, these, too. Of course, you have heard that a hail-storm has damaged all your father's buck-wheat?"

"Yes, my father has written to me about it. I am soon going to see him."

"That's right! And may I ask of what rank you are?"

"There—the eternal question again," thought the young man. "I am of the 12th class," he answered with reluctance.

"Hm! 12th class. Nothing particular. And of course, you have already left service, haven't you?"

"Yes, I have left service."

"So! Hm! You young folks have taken it into your heads to neglect serving your country; you are much too clever for service—by far too clever! And may I ask you, what your prospects are—what schemes?"

"I wish, Vassily Ivanovitsch, to see Russia,—to become acquainted with her."

"Sir?"

"I wish to become acquainted with my country."

"What, what?"

“ It is my intention to study my country.”

“ You must excuse me, but, indeed, I do not understand you. What is it you mean to study ? ”

“ My country—Russia.”

“ And may I ask you, how do you mean to study Russia ? ”

“ From two points of view ; in reference to her history, and in reference to her nationality ; which two points, however, are very closely united. By analysing our monuments, our tales and traditions, and by listening to every echo of our old times, I may succeed. I beg your pardon—we may succeed—I have a few companions in the projected task—in learning the true spirit, the real character of the nation and its wants, and we may discover from what source our national civilisation is to flow, taking advantage of the experience of other states, without, however, making them our models.”

“ So, so ! ” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch, “ I think—the best means for you to study Russia is—to get married. Leave off, my dear boy, your high-sounding hollow speeches, and come along to Kazan. Your rank—although not high—is yet an officer’s. Your estate is a handsome

property. You will easily make a match—thank Heaven, our crop of nice girls is abundant! Trust me, brother, get married, and stay at home to help your father. It is time he should have some assistance. You, probably, are of opinion that a country life is a dull one? Upon my soul it is not! In the morning you go into the fields, then you return home, you lunch, you dine, you take a nap, you visit your neighbours—and the *fêtes*, and hunting, and your home-bred orchestra, and the village fairs, eh? Upon my soul it is worth more than the Parisian life. And then you will have children; your field crops will be eight-fold; your granaries will contain more corn than you are able to get threshed, and your pockets more silver roubles than you can count. It is then, believe me, that you will know Russia!”

“A fine picture it is, you have just drawn,” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“Do you know what? You are going to Kazan?”

“Yes.”

“When?”

“The sooner—the better.”

“Very well! And may I ask, how you intend to go?”

“ I have not yet decided.”

“ Have you a carriage ? ”

“ No, I have none.”

“ Will you go with me ? ”

“ Sir ? ”

“ Will you go with me ? I’ll take you to your father’s I am sure your pocket is not very well stocked now, eh ? ”

“ Sir ?—I really do not—”

“ Fiddle-de-dee—no humbug—tell the simple truth.”

“ I own that I am rather short of cash.”

“ Well, well. I’ll take you to your father’s, and then we’ll settle accounts with him.”

“ Indeed, sir, I must—I am ashamed—”

“ Nonsense, nonsense. Leave off your dandyism. I hate ceremony. Well then, is the matter settled ? ”

“ I shall indeed be very much obliged to you.”

“ Very well, very well ! Now—can you guess how we shall go ? ”

“ In a coach ? ”

“ No.”

“ In a barouche ? ”

“ No.”

“ In a britzka ? ”

“ No.”

“ In a cart then ? ”

“ No, and no, and no.”

“ In what then ? ”

Here Vassily Ivanovitsch smiled cunningly,
and exclaimed in a solemn voice :

“ In a *Tarantas* ! ”

CHAPTER II.

THE DEPARTURE.

A FEW days later, there was an extraordinary bustle in a little wooden house in the Sabatchaia Ploshadka. A *yamtchik* was busying himself in the courtyard with his post-horses ; maid-servants were running up and down the staircase. All the rooms were barricaded with trunks, portmanteaus, boxes, hay, cord, besides all sort of rubbish. In an attic of the house stood Vassily Ivanovitsch dressing himself in his travelling costume.

An endless worsted scarf of every rainbow hue (precious souvenir of conjugal perseverance), encircled his mighty neck ; his feet stood in a pair of white felt galoshes, and the shaggy *ergak** with the hair outside which covered his body, gave Vassily Ivanovitsch a look of beauty quite Homeric. On one side of him stood the landlord with one

* A furred coat worn with the fur outside.

hand in his *kaftan*'s breast pocket, and on the other side the landlady, an enormous woman, holding a huge pie prepared for the journey; both of them accompanying their bows with numerous gesticulations.

“Allow us, sir, to bid farewell to your honour,” they said, interrupting each other,—“to wish you a happy journey. We beg you to accept our bread and salt for your journey.* It is God’s sending; may it bring you good health; it may be useful to you on your journey. Should your honour return to Moscow, we humbly beseech you not to offend us by taking other lodgings than in our house. We confess we are very, very happy when we have such lodgers as your honour. We beg you most humbly ——”

“Thank you, landlord,” Vassily Ivanovitsch benevolently answered, “thank you landlady. I’ll not forget you—Ho! Senka! take the pie and pack it carefully, do you hear?—I hope we may meet again.—Mind that it does not crumble to pieces.—We have always been good friends.”

* It is a custom in Russia to present a friend or a patron at his arrival and departure with a gift, which if even not consisting of bread and salt, is nevertheless so called, from its primitive character.

Vassily Ivanovitsch now put his pocket-book and passport into his bosom, his purse into his trousers pocket, girded his ergak with a sash, crossed himself before the holy image, sat down for a few minutes,* and having embraced three times both the landlord and the landlady, they all proceeded to the court-yard.

In the court-yard stood the tarantas in its full and beauteous glory.

And what a tarantas it was !—what a marvellous invention of human skill !

Represent to yourself two long poles, two parallel, immeasurable, endless rods ; near their middle you see, as if dropped there accidentally, an enormous basket, or box, or hamper, rounded off at the sides, resembling a gigantic bowl from an antediluvian banquet. At each end of the poles you see adapted two wheels, and the whole structure may appear some wild creature of a fantastical world, something between a grasshopper and a britzka. And what am I to say about the artful skill, which in a few moments made the tarantas disappear under all kinds of chests,

* When the preparations for a journey are completed, the intending travellers, with their friends and all the servants, *sit down* for a few moments, in order, as it is expressed, not to destroy the peace of the house.

trunks, boxes, baskets, hampers, casks, and other packages. To begin, I will tell you that the scooped vessel I want to describe had no seats : a huge feather bed filled the whole abyss. Then came seven down pillows in chintz cases, of a dark colour, to stand the dust, rising upon their soft foundation in the shape of a pyramid : the pie in a mat-bag ; a flagon with anise-brandy ; different kinds of roasted poultry ; cheese-cakes, a ham, loaves of bread, *kalatchs* ;* and last, though not least, the cellaret, the inseparable travelling companion of every provincial squire. This cellaret, whose outside is covered with seal-skin and bound with tin hoops, contains an entire tea service, and is an invention although very useful yet not by any means of an artistical workmanship. Open it. Under the cover of the box you find a japanned tea-tray with the image upon it of a sleeping shepherdess, executed in a bold style by the brush of some rising genius. The box itself, lined with paper, contains a tea-pot of a dirty white colour with a gold edge, a glass bottle full of tea, and a similar one of rum ; then come two glass tumblers, a cream-jug, and other appurtenances for

* A wheaten bread, baked in the form of a large padlock, for which Moscow is celebrated.

tea enjoyment. However, I must remark that the Russian cellaret deserves all your respect. It is one of the few, the very few of our national features which, amidst general changes and ameliorations, has preserved its primitive shape ; it did not get seduced by the lure of a deceptive ostentation, but has passed through all the vicissitudes of the times unscattered and unchanged. Such is the Russian cellaret !

On every side of the tarantas were strung up mat-bags and bonnet boxes. One of these contained a cap and a crimson turban from Madame Lebourg's, in Smith's-bridge, for Vassily Ivanovitsch's lady ; other boxes were full of books and toys for Vassily Ivanovitsch's children ; there were two table lamps, some kitchen utensils, some grocery for Vassily Ivanovitsch's table use ; and lastly, three monstrous portmanteaus, surmounted by a pile of other boxes, crammed full and bound with thick cords, rose like the obelisk of Luxor on the back of the travelling car.

The red-haired yamtchik had just finished putting three parched, broken-winded horses to the tarantas when our younger hero, Ivan Vassilievitsch, arrived in the court-yard. The collar of his Macintosh was raised over his ears ; he had

under his arm a small portmanteau, and in his hands a silk umbrella, a carpet-bag, and a splendidly bound puce-coloured morocco book, with steel clasps.

“Welcome, Ivan Vassilievitsch !” said Vassily Ivanovitsch, “it is high time we were off. And where is your luggage ?”

“I have every thing with me.”

“So ! But you will freeze to an icicle in your bag ! However I have there a furred morning-gown which I don’t want. What do you prefer to be laid under you—a feather-bed or a mattress ?”

“Sir ?” asked the amazed Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“I ask you which you like best, a feather-bed or a mattress ?”

Ivan Vassilievitsch was tempted to take to flight, and looked around. It seemed to him that all Europe would see him in the furred morning-gown, on a feather-bed, riding in a tarantas.

“Now then ?” inquired again Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“A mattress, sir !” was the almost inaudible answer.

“Senka, put a mattress for Ivan Vassilievitsch ; but be quick, blockhead !”

Senka performed his Cyclopean work.

Vassily Ivanovitsch continued with a complacent smile: "And the tarantas! Eh! how do you like the tarantas? Easy as a cradle! No upsetting, no continual repairing like your spring-carriages. As soft as a bed."

Ivan Vassilievitsch stared at his travelling companion, not in the least convinced of the possibility of the promised comfort. However there was nothing to be done: having squandered all his money, he really had no other means to reach his father's estate.

Was it not a most happy circumstance that he should have met Vassily Ivanovitsch, a friend of his father's, who undertook to transport him on credit.

During the journey, might he not be able to study his country. All that would be very well, but for the ignoble feather-bed, the chintz pillow-cases, and this cursed tarantas.

Ivan Vassilievitsch heaved a deep sigh, accompanying it with a low hum: "*Nel furor della tempesta*—If we started."

And time it is to start. The horses are ready. The tarantas is surrounded by landlord, landlady, men and maid servants. Every one helps, every one bows, every one wishes a happy journey.

Vassily Ivanovitsch, with much assistance in pushing and pressing, at last succeeded in reaching his seat, and dropped into the feather-bed. Ivan Vassilievitsch followed him, and likewise sunk down amidst the pillow-cases. Senka's place was on the box, near the yamtchik.

“All right?”

“All right, sir.”

“With care then. Down the hill, mind and keep up the horses. No racing or stopping, but a measured trot—Senka, don't you fall asleep on the box. Do you hear, scarecrow? You'll tumble down in less than no time. Well then, with God's help—Go on!”

The tarantas started, moving heavily from side to side.

“Good-bye, good-bye.”

“God bless you, Vassily Ivanovitsch. Don't forget us, sir,—we most humbly beg your honour.”

And landlord and landlady, servants and maids, every one followed the tarantas out of the courtyard, and stopped outside the gate till it was lost to their sight. And on it rolled through white walled Moscow, without attracting any particular attention, although one might have stared with

curiosity at the *monstre* vehicle, full of pillows, on which was lying the bristly Vassily Ivanovitsch, as if he were a petted bear ; no little admiration too deserved the dandy stuck up at his side, as even did Senka, wrapped up in a sheep-skin cloak, like an inhabitant of a glacial desert. Everywhere else they would have attracted attention, but in Moscow we are accustomed to similar sights.

Only a few street boys remarked to each other —“Look at that country squire. Does he not look puffed up !”

CHAPTER III.

“TRAVELLING IMPRESSIONS.”

As soon as our travellers had passed the town-barrier, the following conversation began:—

“Vassily Ivanovitsch!”

“What is your command?”

“Do you know what I am thinking of?”

“No, brother, I don’t.”

“I think, that as we are now beginning our travels—”

“Travels? What travels?”

“Are we not travelling now?”

“Not in the least, Ivan Vassilievitsch, not in the least. We are simply going from Moscow to Kazan.”

“Well, is that not travelling?”

“It is in foreign countries that people travel. We are no travellers, but only country gentlemen returning home.”

“That’s all the same. As we are, then, now proceeding on a journey, methinks I could employ my time usefully.”

“Usefully? How do you mean?”

“Listen. It is now quite the fashion in foreign countries to publish ‘*Travelling Impressions.*’ You find every thing in them: where you have passed the night, what you have seen, what remarked, what guessed: there are reflections about customs, civilisation, arts, commerce, antiquities—in a word, about the whole life of a nation. All that is combined and published under the title of ‘*Travelling Impressions.*’”

“So!”

“Unfortunately, however, many of such ‘*Impressions*’ do not bear the stamp of truth, and so lose much of their value. Besides, all that can be said about the different countries of the West, has been so often said and so often repeated, that no new conclusions can be made, no new ideas formed. There is no field open to an observer.”

“Well, then, brother, what do you mean to do?”

“Listen. Travelling impressions in foreign countries are of no use to any one, because every

one knows them by heart. Travelling impressions in Russia, however, may show much that is interesting, especially when they are governed by truth. Think yourself, what a wide space for contemplation: the study of antique monuments, the study of human life, the study of our beautiful, our great, and holy fatherland! Do you understand me?"

"Upon my soul I do not. You talk nonsense!"

"My hope, wish, and aim is," continued Ivan Vassilievitsch with ecstasy, "to become useful to my countrymen. I intend, therefore, to take note of all I see. I will write down every thing worth remarking, with conscientiousness—with the strictest truth. I have with me all the necessary materials for my task: an ink-horn, pens, and paper;" and Ivan Vassilievitsch triumphantly pointed to the morocco book in his lap. "May this book," he continued, "this book of my '*Travelling Impressions*,' make me illustrious through the whole of Russia. My friends will read it, and may Heaven direct them to follow my example, and enter with greater minuteness still into those matters, which I shall, perhaps, but slightly touch."

“And may I ask you what you intend to write down in your book?”

“Anything really interesting, really worthy of attention. Any information I may obtain about the Russian people, and traditions about the Russian peasant and the Russian nobleman, both of whom I like with all my heart, as I sincerely hate the *tchinovnik*,* and the distorted nameless class of society, which has risen amidst us from dirty pretensions to a false, pitiful civilisation.”

“And may I ask you why you so sincerely hate the *tchinovniks*?” asked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“I don’t mean to say that I hate persons who serve the government conscientiously and fairly; on the contrary, I highly respect them; but I hate that piteous type of coarse barbarity which you find amongst the nobility and the merchants, and in every class to which I apply the title of *tchinovnik*.”

“And why do you hate them so?”

“Because those persons whom I thus class have no sound basis; they assume an outward polish, but are, in reality, greater barbarians than the peasants, whose nature is yet unspoiled. I hate

* A person holding an official appointment under Government. From *tshin*—rank. It is frequently employed to express the lower ranks only.

them because there is nothing really Russian left in them—no character, no features. I hate them because their tavern-bred manners, self-complacent rudeness, and tinsel elegance, do not only stop the progress of real civilisation, but often direct it upon a false track. They are a monstrosity, rooted in the national soil, but totally heterogeneous to the national character. Look at them. Where are the noble characteristics of our nation? They are ugly and dirty—they are all toppers, they are bribe-takers, they try to oppress every one, and at the same time are insolent to their inferiors in station; they are a spoiled race, degenerated from a fine origin. What can be more beautiful, more picturesque than the Russian peasant? It is owing to a blameable indifference in our higher classes that they care so little about him, and often look on him as on a savage from the Aleut Isles. In the Russian peasant lies the embryo of the Russian chivalric spirit, the origin of our nation's grandeur."

"Cunning fellows they are, the vagabonds," remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"Yes, cunning, and thereby clever; quick in imitation, quick in appropriating what is new or useful—ready prepared for civilisation. Try to

teach a labourer in foreign countries anything out of the way of his daily occupation, and he will still cling to his plough: with us, only give the word, and the peasant becomes musician, painter, mechanic, steward, anything you like."

"Well, that's true," remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"And besides," continued Ivan Vassilievitsch, "in what country can you find such a strongly-marked and instinctive notion of his duties, such readiness to assist his fellow-creatures, such cheerfulness, such benignity, so much gentleness and strength combined?"

"A splendid fellow the Russian peasant—a splendid fellow indeed;" interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"And, nevertheless, we disdain him, we look at him with contempt; nay, more, instead of making any effort to cultivate his mind, we try to spoil it by every possible means."

"How so?"

"By the loathsome establishment we have—our household serfs. Our house serf is the first step towards the tchinovnik. He goes without a beard and wears a coat of a Western cut; he is an idler, a debauchee, a drunkard, a thief, and yet he

assumes airs of consequence before the peasant, whom he disdains, and from whose labour he draws his own subsistence and his poll-tax. After some time, more or less, according to circumstances, the household serf becomes a clerk; he gets his liberty and a place as a writer in some district court; as a writer in the government's service he disdains, in addition to the peasant, his late comrades in the household; he learns to cavil in business, and begins to take small bribes in poultry, eggs, corn, &c; he studies roguery systematically, and goes one step lower; he becomes a secretary and a genuine tchinovnik. Then his sphere is enlarged; he gets a new existence; he disdains the peasant, the house serf, the clerk, and the writer, because, he says, they are all uncivilised people. His wants are now greater, and you cannot bribe him except with bank-notes. Does he not take wine now at his meals? Does he not patronise a little pharo? Is he not obliged to present his lady with a costly cap or a silk gown? He fills up his place, and without the least remorse—like a tradesman who stands behind his counter—he sells his influence as if it were merchandise. It happens now and then that he is caught:—‘Served him right,’ say his comrades

then ; ‘ take bribes, but take them prudently, so as not to be caught.’ ”

“ But they are not all as you describe them,” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“ Certainly not. Exceptions, however, do not alter the rule.”

“ And yet the officers in the government service with us are for the most part elected by the nobility and gentry.”

“ That is just where the great evil lies,” continued Ivan Vassilievitsch. “ What in other countries is an object of public competition, is with us left to ourselves. What right have we to complain against our government, who has left it in our discretion to elect officers to regulate our internal affairs ? Is it not our own fault, that, instead of paying due attention to a subject of such great importance, we make game of it ? We have in every province many a civilised man, who, backed by the laws, could give a salutary direction to public affairs ; but they all fly the elections like a plague, leaving them in the hands of intriguing schemers. The most wealthy land-owners lounge on the Nevsky-Perspective, or travel abroad, and but seldom visit their estates. For them elections are—a caricature : they amuse themselves over the

bald head of the sheriff or the thick belly of the president of the Court of Assizes, and they forget that to them is entrusted not only their own actual welfare and that of their peasantry, but their entire future destiny. Yes, thus it is! Had we not taken such a mischievous course, were we not so unpardonably thoughtless, how grand would have been the vocation of the Russian noble, to lead the whole nation forwards on the path of genuine civilisation. I repeat again, it is our own fault. Instead of being useful to their country, what has become of the Russian nobility?"

"They have ruined themselves," emphatically interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"Yes," continued Ivan Vassilievitsch, "they have ruined themselves. They have squandered their royal fortunes in fêtes, theatres, mistresses, and all imaginable rubbish. All our old names disappear. The coats of arms on our princely mansions crumble to dust, because there is nothing to keep them in repair; and the Russian noble, once wealthy, and ever hospitable and cheerful, parts from his estates to speculative merchants, who establish factories and stores in his once gorgeous palaces. Where is our aristocracy,

Vassily Ivanovitsch? What is your opinion about our aristocrats?"

"My opinion is," responded Vassily Ivanovitsch, "that we shall get no horses at the next stage."

CHAPTER IV.



THE FIRST STAGE.

UNFORTUNATELY Vassily Ivanovitsch was not incorrect in his prediction.

The tarantas halted at a low little house; the striped post near the entrance proclaimed it to be the residence of the Post Stage-inspector. It had become late and dark, and a dim lantern but indistinctly showed the shaky door steps. A long thatched shed, of a horse-shoe shape, harboured horses, cows, pigs, and poultry. In the middle of the soft and muddy yard rose the ruins of a well. Hideous beggars, some blind, some dumb, some having lost a limb, and all covered with rags, were thronging at the entrance door; amongst them you could see women, old and young, drunk and sober, and a crowd of children, with their arms pulled out of the sleeves of their thin cotton

shirts, and crossed over their breasts as a defence against the cold. It was a melancholy sight to behold how eagerly they all rushed towards the tarantas, some showing their scarred limbs, and others asking alms in a whining tone.

In the meanwhile, as our travellers were endeavouring to disengage themselves from off the feather-beds and pillows, the Stage-inspector, in a threadbare green uniform, came out on the steps and surveyed them, shading his eyes with one hand.

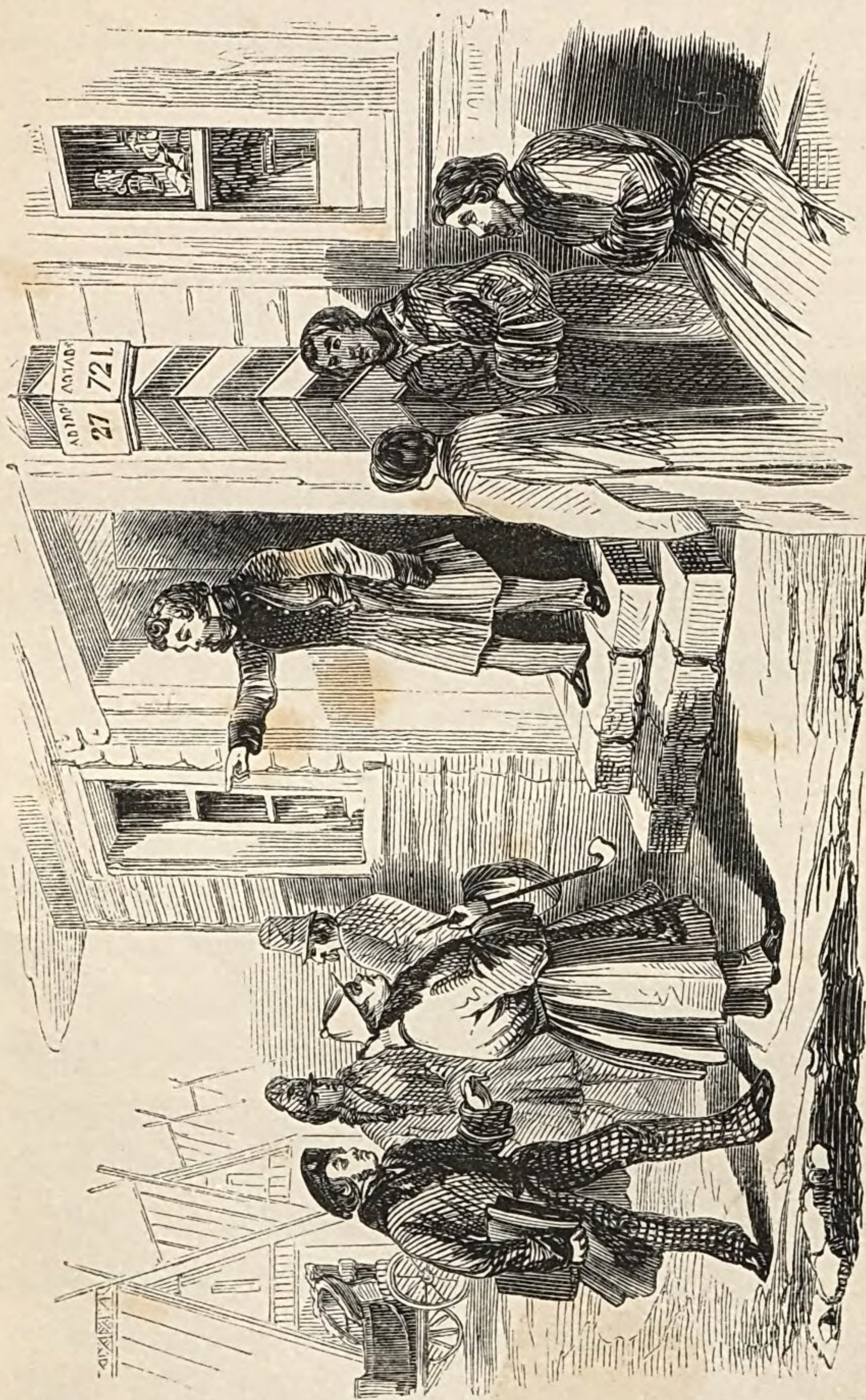
“A tarantas—three horses!” he remarked with some contempt. “They may wait. Be off, you vagabonds!” he added, as he observed the beggars.

Like a pack of frightened dogs, the ugly crowd dispersed on all sides, and our travelling friends entered the stage-house.

“As you please, gentlemen, but I have no horses. There has been so much traffic here to-day, that you would scarcely believe it.”

“What! no horses?” cried out Ivan Vassilievitsch angrily.

“Please to inspect yourself my books. I have, according to regulations, nine teams of three horses each. The lady of a court councillor this morning took six horses; the mail took three



The Post Stage Inspector.

teams, a colonel who passed here on a crown commission, took four horses."

"Well, there still remain eight horses," remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"No, sir, there are none, please to look in my books."

"And what has become of the other eight?"

"I have some courier horses left, but I dare not give them. If a government courier should pass! Judge yourself, sir!"

"But we will complain to the authorities about your conduct."

"As you please, sir. There is the book, if you like to write down your complaint, but as for horses I have none to give you."

"Between Moscow and Vladimir," remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch, "there are never any horses to be had, you may come at what hour you like. The thoroughfare must indeed be very much frequented. I think this is the thirteenth time I have come this way, and I have always heard the same song!"

"You can hire unlicensed horses," said the Stage-inspector in a kind tone.

"Unlicensed horses!" groaned Vassily Ivanovitsch. "If I have to remain here three days, I

will not hire unlicensed horses. The rascals, Judases—they want half a rouble the verst* for every horse. Never! Never!”

“Certainly sir,” remarked the Stage-inspector, “they won’t take a small fare. They do as they like; however, forage now is so very dear.”

“The robbers!” continued Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“Some days ago,” said the Stage-inspector with a smile, “a general-officer played them a famous trick. I had not a single horse left in the stables,—two couriers, the mail, and a great number of travellers, had used up all my teams, when, suddenly, a footman, an enormous fellow with dreadful mustachios, rushes into the room, ‘His Excellency bids you to come to his carriage.’ Well, I quickly button my uniform and run to the General. I hear him cry, ‘Horses, this instant!’—What am I to do! I come close to the carriage: ‘Your Excellency,’ says I, ‘will excuse—all the horses are gone.’ ‘You lie, rascal,’ he cried, ‘I’ll make you a soldier. Do you know to whom you speak, eh? Don’t you see who it is who wants horses, eh?’ ‘I know very well, your Excellency, but upon my soul it is no fault of mine.’ To my luck at this

* An English mile is equal to $1\frac{3}{4}$ versts.

moment there entered the court-yard the squinting Andruha and the bald Erema, desperate vagabonds both: 'Would you not order unlicensed horses, sir,' they asked the General. 'And how much will you take?' 'Two white notes,* your Excellency,' Andruha answered, 'fifty roubles in paper money.' The stage was a short one—but sixteen versts, gentlemen.

" 'Very well,' cried out the General, 'only make haste, you rascals!'

"My yamtchiks, full of delight at such a splendid bargain, put the horses to the carriage in less than no time. Off they went like lightning, leaving behind them a cloud of dust and every one envious of their luck. Well, sir, the next morning, the yamtchiks return home, and I make them my compliments about their luck. I see they scratch themselves behind their ears. 'Damn the luck,' at last remarked Andruha. The General, gentlemen, had paid them but the legal Post-fare, and did not even give them any drink money. Was it not a capital joke?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" shouted Vassily Ivanovitsch,

* The paper money in circulation in Russia is of different colours. Notes of three roubles are green; of five roubles, blue; of ten, red; of twenty-five, white, &c.

“Capital, capital indeed; bravo General! It is time the rascals should get a good lesson!”

Ivan Vassilievitsch, in the meanwhile, was pensively examining the Stage-inspector’s dwelling.

The walls of the room, and the stove particularly, showed some dubious remains of whitewash, which bashfully appeared through manifold layers of dirt, dust, and soot. A Dutch cuckoo-clock ornamented the corner next to the door. The opposite one was filled with the shrine of holy images, under which a long deal form stood before a table of the same material. The walls were placarded with a printed bill of Post regulations, and many engravings of moral allegoric subjects; together with a picture of Malek-Adel on a furious horse, the “Return of the Profligate Son,” a portrait of Count Platoff,* and the features of Geneviève of Brabant, much injured by flies;—that was the principal room or office. The private apartments of the Stage-inspector were on the right-hand side. Here you could, without any difficulty, guess his habits and inclinations. At the side of his bed, upon which was a blanket which had seen much service, rose proudly, on

* Russian General and Attaman (chief) of the Don Cossacks; he distinguished himself during the campaign in 1812.

three feet only, the chief ornament of the room, a chest of drawers, without locks or handles, but of real mahogany, and covered with dust and a profusion of every imaginable bauble ; and what baubles they were ! There was the half of a pair of spectacles, a pair of snuffers, and tallow candle-ends, and empty pomatum-pots, and a pocket-comb, and a cigar-box without cigars, and nails, and a bark snuff-box, and a whole collection of head-coverings : a green cloth cap, appropriated to the public functions of the owner ; a black hat with white stains, which the Stage-inspector sports when he becomes a man of the world—when he pays visits at the publican's or the baker's ; a white hat with black stains when he wants to become *fast*—when he flirts with the country belles : there were also two or three old winter fur-caps, and lastly a primitive velvet smoking-cap, with the remains of a silk tassel. On one side of the chest of drawers stood a small pyramid, ornamented with four long pipes and a tobacco-bag, once marked in worsted.

Ivan Vassilievitsch inspected all this pensively, and became yet more pensive. What he was thinking of, Heaven knows !

In the meanwhile other travellers had arrived,

and the room got crowded. A professor of the Gymnasium at Tobolsk, with his wife, a pretty Englishwoman, who had been lately married, and were proceeding on their journey from Moscow to their destination ; a student in an ample cloak, with his pipe and a pointer bitch ; a merry Major, who, having dropped his travelling bear-skin, bowed to each person present separately, asked every one, with whom he had the honour to speak, inquired from every one where he came from, and where and what for he was going, made jocose remarks about the Stage-inspector, was witty with the yamtchik, who, near the door, asked him for some drink-money, and by his manners highly pleased Vassily Ivanovitsch.

The Stage-inspector gave everybody one and the same answer : “ All my horses are gone ; as soon as they return from the next stage there will be no delay on my part.”

There was nothing to be done.

Vassily Ivanovitsch, a gentleman of experience and philosophy, determined to make the best of his time. He had already got before him a boiling tea-urn, surrounded by tumblers and other tea implements. In compliance with his invitation the whole assembled company drew near the

table, every one's features brightened, every coat was unbuttoned, and tea, aromatic tea, the delight of every genuine Russian soul, in every condition of life, began to circulate in cups, tumblers, and saucers. Acquaintance grew closer and closer. First, they all abused the bad roads, then the small supply of post-horses, till at last conversation became spread over subjects of the amplest diversity. The student spoke about snipes, partridges, and hare-hunting; the Major already addressed every one in the second person of the singular number, he informed the whole society that he was going to leave service, the amount of his property, that he wanted to get married but was refused, that he was weary of his life, and in one word, without the least provocation from his audience, he confided to them his biography from the cradle up to the present moment, seasoning his narration with sundry jokes and sallies of wit. Vassily Ivanovitsch laughed heartily, tapped the Major's shoulder and remarked: "Capital fellow, capital fellow, genuine soldier-bones!" Ivan Vassilievitsch was gleaning from the Tobolsk professor, information about Siberia. The English lady was the only person silent and she sat looking expressively at her husband.

Suddenly a noise proceeding from the courtyard was heard. The tea-party pricked up their ears.

Some heavy carriage had evidently stopped at the stage-house; a bustle succeeded, the tinkling of a bell, the trampling of horses, and, after a few minutes, a noise of wheels proclaimed the departure of a traveller.

“What means that?” asked Vassily Ivanovitsch of the Stage-inspector as he entered.

“A privy councillor has just passed.”

Every one looked at each other with scornful indignation.

“Where did he get horses from?”

“You, gentlemen,” answered the Stage-inspector, rather perplexed, and shrugging his shoulders, “you, gentlemen, are pleased to take tea, and the privy councillor, gentlemen—the privy councillor—you will agree yourselves, gentlemen—”

CHAPTER V.



THE HOTEL.

EVERY one who has travelled between Moscow and Vladimir knows well from experience that there is on this highroad not a single hotel, tavern, or inn where you can bewail in comfort the absence of post-horses. The so-called offices of the stage-inspectors offer their deal benches for the melancholy meditations of your blighted hopes. Vassily Ivanovitsch therefore had ample opportunity to have recourse to his favourite cellar, and to drown his repeated disappointments in the fragrant beverage. Ivan Vassilievitsch was not less fortunate in having plenty of time to meditate about the destiny of Russia, and to admire the vigorous beauty of the Russian peasants, with whom, I must confess, he began to feel wearied. There was nothing worth noting in

his "*Impressions.*" At every stage the same prosaic provoking burden: "All the horses are gone."

Ivan Vassilievitsch now and then looked at Vassily Ivanovitsch; Vassily Ivanovitsch now and then looked at Ivan Vassilievitsch; till both grew drowsy, and continued sitting quietly opposite each other for hours, only nodding their heads.

Moreover, a dreadful catastrophe had happened to them. Between two stages, whilst Vassily Ivanovitsch was dozing, tired by the jostling of the tarantas upon a fascine-road, and was forgetting, amidst his snores, the world's vanities, whilst Ivan Vassilievitsch was, in idea, at the Italian Opera, and Senka balancing like a clock pendulum on the box, some light-fingered artists had cut down two portmanteaus and sundry boxes from the back of the tarantas. Vassily Ivanovitsch's sorrow was genuine, and how could it be otherwise, as amongst other effects, he missed the cap and the crimson turban from Madame Lebourg's, in Smith's-bridge, which was destined, as I have already said, for his beloved lady herself, Avdotia Petrowna.

Arrived at the next stage he addressed to the

inspector his complaint and requested a pursuit of the criminals. The Stage-inspector comforted him as best he could: "Be easy, sir," he said, "your effects are lost. It is not the first time, that such an accident has happened. Twelve versts from here there is a village full of wags, it is a known fact that, sir."

"What wags?" inquired Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"It is a known fact, sir! They play tricks at night time. As soon as you fall asleep, in the twinkling of an eye, they cut down something from the back of your carriage. It is a known fact that, sir."

"But that is highway robbery!"

"No, sir, it is not highway robbery, it is only tricks."

"Nice tricks," remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch in a melancholy tone as he proceeded on his journey; "nice tricks, and what will Avdotia Petrowna say to it?"

"I wish we could take some rest in a comfortable inn," said Ivan Vassilievitsch in a not less piteous voice. "I feel as if all my limbs were broken. This is the third day already since we left Moscow!"

"The fourth day, sir, the fourth!"

“Is it?”

“Yes, certainly. However, we go with extra-post! No gain from us for the unlicensed cut-throats!”

“I wish we had arrived at Vladimir. It is there I can commence my ‘*Impressions*.’ Vladimir is an antique town; everything there must still bear the spirit of Old Russia. In Vladimir I may discover the source of our orthodox national life. I have already mentioned to you, Vassily Ivanovitsch, that I have—no, that we have, as there are several of us—that we intend to free ourselves from the pernicious civilisation of the West, and establish an independent civilisation of the East.”

“Is this already in your book?”

“No, sir, there is nothing yet in my book. Judge for yourself. What could I have noted? The road, the villages, the stage-inspectors! Is not all this very uninteresting, very prosaic and dull. Upon my soul, there has been nothing at all worth notice. Let us only get into Vladimir!”

“We shall make a good dinner at least,” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“The metropolis of Old Russia!”

“A good hotel!”

“The Golden Gates !”

“But very high prices !”

“Go on then, yamtchik !”

At last they saw before them Vladimir, with numerous domes and church steeples, the genuine characteristics of a Russian town.

Ivan Vassilievitsch's heart was throbbing. Vassily Ivanovitsch smiled.

“To the hotel !” he exclaimed.

The yamtchik whirled his whip ; his half-starved horses threw up their noses and went like the wind. The tarantas was bounding over hillocks and gutters, and playing battledore and shuttlecock with our friends. The yamtchik, holding the reins in his left hand and whirling his whip with the other, with piercing shrieks encouraging his steeds, stood on the foot-board ; he seemed to have lost his senses, and they flew madly on.

They came to some windmills, fencings, huts ; then some small wooden houses, then some stone houses. They had entered Vladimir. The tarantas stopped near a large house in the High Street.

“The hotel, sir,” said the yamtchik, dropping his reins.

A pale waiter, in a dirty white shirt,* and dirty apron, welcomed the guests with sundry bows and standard compliments, and conducted them by a dirty wooden staircase, to a large room not less dirty, but ornamented with large mirrors in mahogany frames, and a painted ceiling. Along the walls stood numerous chairs, and before a ragged sofa was a round table, covered with a dirty cloth.

“What have you got?” said Vassily Ivanovitch to the waiter.

“We have everything you can wish for, sir,” proudly answered the waiter.

“Have you beds?” asked Ivan Vassilievitch.

“No, sir, no beds.”

Ivan Vassilievitch grew sombre.

“What have you got for dinner?”

“Everything, sir.”

“What do you mean by everything?”

“We have got soups, stschi,—you may have a beef-steak, sir; but here is the bill of fare, sir,” added the waiter, presenting a scrap of grey paper which lay on the table.

* We have used this term to express a national garment which is worn by all the lower classes in lieu of a coat (and is somewhat similar to a French blouse), because no other garment is worn under it.

Ivan Vassilievitsch began to inspect the bill of fare.

“ Well, make haste,” said Vassily Ivanovitsch, having given his orders.

The waiter proceeded now with all the necessary arrangements. He took away the dirty cloth from the table, and brought, in its place, another as dirty ; then he brought plates, knives, forks, and spoons ; then came a salt-cellar ; then, after half-an-hour had passed, and our hungry travellers had already armed themselves with spoons to encounter the awaited soup, there came a flagon of vinegar.

Every impatient exclamation Vassily Ivanovitsch made to the waiter got the phlegmatic reply : “ This instant, sir,” and the instant was an hour-and-a-half long. “ This instant,” — a weighty word in Russia !

At last appeared the wished for soup-tureen. Vassily Ivanovitsch opened his vast mouth, and set to work. Ivan Vassilievitsch angled out of his plate some hairs, some chips, and other heterogeneous matters, sighed, and endeavoured to follow his companion’s example. Vassily Ivanovitsch seemed in the highest state of beatitude, he was silent, and ate for three.

Not so was it with Ivan Vassilievitsch; he could not touch a single dish—he stared at every one of them with horror and disgust.

“Have you any wine?” he asked the waiter.

“Certainly, sir! All possible wines, sir! Champagne, half champagne, dry madeira, Lafitte. First-rate wines, sir.”

“Bring a bottle of Lafitte.”

The waiter was lost for half-an-hour; at last he came back, and triumphantly put a bottle of red vinegar before our young man.

“Now,” said Vassily Ivanovitsch, after a short pause, “now we must lay down a little. Senka!” he shouted.

Senka entered the room.

“Have you dined, Senka?”

“Yes, sir, I have dined, thank you.”

“Prepare my bed then. Put together some chairs, bring up the feather-bed, the pillows, and the dressing-gown. Don’t you see, Ivan Vassilievitsch,” he added, “how well it is to carry these things with you. How do you intend to lay down?”

“I shall ask for some hay,” said Ivan Vassilievitsch. “Waiter! have you got any hay?”

“No, sir, we have got none.”



The Hotel at Vladimir

“Try to get some, I’ll reward you for the trouble.”

“Very well, sir, I shall get some hay this instant.”

The arrangement of Vassily Ivanovitsch’s ambulatory sleeping-apartment went on favourably. Half the contents of the tarantas were brought into the room. The feather-beds rested on a dozen chairs put together. Vassily Ivanovitsch undressed himself and dropped into the feathery abyss.

Half-an-hour had passed when the waiter came back, exhausted and panting under the weight of a whole waggon-load of hay, which he thrust in a corner of the room. Ivan Vassilievitsch began his preparations for the night’s rest. First, he put upon the next window-sill the yet virginal book of his “*Travelling Impressions*,” in company with his watch and pocket-book; then, he covered the hay with his Macintosh and lay down in despair.

Animals of every species now began to make our travellers fidget from side to side.

They both remained silent, and endeavoured to fall asleep.

It was quite dark in the room, and the pendu-

lum of the clock despondently beat the time in the silence. Half-an-hour passed.

“ Vassily Ivanovitsch ! ”

“ Ay ? ”

“ Are you asleep ? ”

“ No, brother, I don't know what is the matter, but I cannot sleep. ”

“ Vassily Ivanovitsch ! ”

“ Well ! ”

“ Do you know what I am thinking of ? ”

“ No, friend, I don't know. ”

“ I am thinking of what use is it to me that the ceiling of this room is painted with flowers and Cupids, and that there are looking-glasses on the walls, in which no one is ever tempted to look. An hotel, methinks, is for travellers, and here nobody takes the least care about travellers. Would it not be by far better to have a modest, clean room, without any pretension to a dirty elegance, but with a good warm bed with clean linen, and without bugs and beetles?—is not also a simple and clean Russian dinner, preferable to any French ragout with hairs in it ? ”

“ I am quite of your opinion, ” interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch ; “ I prefer a good inn to all these hotels in imitation of the foreign ones. ”

Ivan Vassilievitsch continued :

“ I always said, and shall always say, there is nothing I am more disgusted with than a semi-civilisation. All silly, dirty, piteous caricatures of a life uncongenial to us, are as disgusting to me as a mixture of tinsel with mud.”

“ Hallo ! ” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch.

“ Hotels and inns,” Ivan Vassilievitsch continued, “ have a greater signification in the life of a nation than you may suppose. They express the general wants and the general habits ; they facilitate the movements and mutual relations of the different classes of society. In point of hotels and inns we can unquestionably take an example from the West. There they first think about comfort, about cleanliness, and after that about decorations and ceilings.—Vassily Ivanovitsch ! ”

“ Well ? ”

“ Do you know what I am now thinking of ? ”

“ No, friend, I don’t know.”

“ I would like to organise a Russian hotel, entirely according to my fancy.”

“ Well, what stops you ? ”

“ It is simply an idea — a project, Vassily Ivanovitsch ; and I am convinced that my hotel would be good, because I would endeavour

to combine with the primitive features of our dwellings, all the accessories of comfort, and the minutest tidiness, which in our times are so necessary for every gentleman. I would send away, without any compassion, all these drunken, ragged waiters, the dull breed of our household-serfs, and would put in their place serviceable active lads, with good wages, and under a strict surveillance. The rooms I would have panelled with oak, varnished and carved; Persian carpets on the floor, and easy divans around. Oh! it will be very comfortable," continued Ivan Vassilievitsch, turning from side to side on the prickly hay. "I am very fond of easy divans. I think, in general, that the furniture of our forefathers' dwellings much resembled those in the East. What is your opinion upon this point? Vassily Ivanovitsch! Vassily Ivanovitsch! Eh! What! He sleeps!" concluded Ivan Vassilievitsch, quite vexed: "he is comfortable on his feather-bed, and I—as my hotel is not yet organised, am obliged to fidget the whole night upon hay!"

CHAPTER VI.

A GOVERNMENT TOWN.

EARLY in the morning, whilst Vassily Ivanovitsch was still shaking the walls with his vigorous snoring, Ivan Vassilievitsch set off to discover antique Russia. The zealous patriot wanted, as has been already mentioned, to push back his mother-country into her antiquity, and then trace out for her the new route for her progress in civilisation. He was fully convinced that this was feasible, — firstly, because several of his friends adhered to the same idea ; and, secondly, because he did not know anything at all about Russia.

Early in the morning, then, he got up full of his pet project, and went to lounge in the streets of Vladimir. His first visit was to a bookseller's shop, where he expected to find learning offered

for sale ; he asked for "A Guide to Vladimir's Antiquities and Monuments." At this demand, the courteous bookseller assured him that a new translation of Paul de Kock's "Laitière de Montfermeil" was a very interesting book, and was at his service, as well as "The Robber's Cavern," and "The Bloody Phantom," the most clever productions of modern Russian literature.

Not satisfied with such a substitute, Ivan Vassilievitsch wanted at least to have some views of the town, upon which the bookseller informed him that as for views he had very beautiful ones, and would sell them cheap, but they were views, not of Vladimir, but of Constantinople. Ivan Vassilievitsch shrugged his shoulders and left the shop. The bookseller pursued him into the street, proposing to him alternately new Parisian caricatures with Russian translations of the titles, "A Complete Whist-player," "A New Key to the Mysteries of Nature," &c.

Poor Ivan Vassilievitsch was obliged to visit the town without a "guide," and he involuntarily confessed to himself his profound ignorance. Although he once had studied history, he had not retained one fixed and sound notion from it. His head was in a kind of foggy chaos : names

without ideas, images without colour. He well recollected Monomachos, and Vsevolod, and Alexander Nevsky, and the times of the Appanages, and the invasions of the Tartars, but he recollected all that like a school-boy who has learnt his task. Ivan Vassilievitsch inspected the Golden Gates, with their white walls and green roof; he stood for some time before them and looked at them:—the Golden Gates did not reveal to him anything. Then he entered the Great Demetrius Church, where he admired the mystical hieroglyphs; then he went to the Cathedral, where he prayed a little, bowed to the tombs of the princes:—the tombs remained closed and mute. He left the Cathedral with a heavy heart, with a desponding doubt. The streets were crowded with men in round hats, and ladies with parasols; the bazaar was stuffed with every kind of fancy rubbish, and the shopmen darted at the passers-by to induce them to purchase; out of the windows of the large building of the different courts of justice, tchinovniks peeped with pens sticking behind their ears.

Ivan Vassilievitsch understood now, or he began to understand, that what is done is done, and cannot by any possible means be done over again;

he understood that our antiquity is not contained in a book, is not to be bought for a *grivennik*,* but by the study of our whole life. And how is it possible to be otherwise. Wherever there are so few traces and monuments left; wherever, likewise, the habits have so much changed as to divide history into two different halves, the past leaves no national reminiscences, but is merely a riddle for the inquirer. Such a sad truth checked Ivan Vassilievitsch in the very beginning of his great project; he therefore decided to leave the chapter relative to Russian antiquities out of the "*Travelling Impressions*," and went for a lounge upon the boulevard.

The situation of this boulevard is charming: on a high hill, with the river Kliasma flowing beneath; in the distance a picturesque valley, extending to the horizon.

Ivan Vassilievitsch sat down on a bench and began pensively to look over the country, undefined and nebulous as is the destiny of nations. For a length of time he sat absorbed in his thoughts, not remarking on the same seat a gentleman, with his back turned towards him, also in thought, and whistling some Italian Opera air.

* A silver coin of about the value of 3*d.*

“Bah ! that’s *Norma*,” thought Ivan Vassilievitch to himself, and turned round to see his neighbour.

They both exclaimed at the same time :

“Feda !”

“Wania !”

“By what accident ?”

“How do you come here ?”

“I have not seen you since I left school !”

“Yes, yes, six years ago !”

“No, brother, eight years. Time flies so very fast. By what accident are you in Vladimir ?”

“On my passage to Kazan ; and you ?”

“I live here.”

“What ! in a government town ?”

“Yes, I cannot help it.”

“And how old you have grown, my dear fellow !”

“You too have so much changed, that were it not for your voice, it would be impossible to know you. What whiskers !”

“A happy life it was we led at school !”

“It was indeed.”

“Do you recollect Ivan Lukitch, the inspector, and Sidorka, the costermonger, and the pastry-cook’s shop at the corner of our street ?”

“And when we pelted Ivan Lukitch in the dark with baked potatoes ;—and when we burnt the wig of the professor of mathematics ! To tell the truth, were you not always a very lazy fellow ? ”

“And you yourself never knew a word of your task.”

“Do you still play the flute ? ”

“No, I have given it up. And you, do you still write poetry ? ”

“I have not written a single verse since a long time. Well, let me hear what you are now doing ? ”

“I have been four years in foreign countries.”

“Lucky fellow ! I can imagine how sorry you were to come back.”

“Not in the least. I really longed for the time of my return to Russia.”

“Indeed ? ”

“It touched my conscience to go wandering about the world, and not to know my own country.”

“What ? don’t you know your own country ? ”

“No, I do not. But I want to know it ; I want to learn.”

“Take me for your teacher then, friend, it is the only thing I have any knowledge of!”

“Jokes aside: I will travel about and look at—”

“At what?”

“At all sorts of people and things. In the first instance, I want to see all the government towns.”

“What for?”

“What for! To see their life, and the difference existing between them.”

“There is no difference between our government towns. See one, and you’ll know them all!”

“Is it possible?”

“It is so, I assure you. Every one has a High-street; one principal shop, where the country gentlemen buy silks for their wives, and champagne for themselves; then there are the Courts of Justice, the assembly rooms, an apothecary’s shop, a river, a square, a bazaar, two or three street-lamps, sentry-boxes for the watchmen, and the governor’s house.”

“The society, however, in the government towns must be different?”

“On the contrary. The society is still more uniform than the buildings.”

“You astonish me, how is that?”

“Listen. There is, of course, in every government town a governor. These do not always resemble each other; but as soon as any one of them appears, police and secretaries immediately become active, merchants and tradesmen bow, and the gentry draw themselves up, with, however, some little awe. Wherever the governor goes, he is sure to find champagne, the wine so much patronised in the province, and every body drinks a bumper to the health of the ‘*father of the province*.’ Governors generally are well-bred, and sometimes very proud. They like to give dinner parties, and benevolently condescend to play a game of whist with rich brandy-contractors and landowners.”

“That’s a common thing,” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“Do not interrupt me. Besides the governor, there is in nearly every government town the governor’s lady. She is a rather peculiar personage. Generally brought up in one of the two capitals, and spoiled with the cringing attentions of her company. On her husband’s first entry into office, she is polite and affable; later, she begins to feel weary of the ordinary provincial intrigues

and gossips ; she gets accustomed to the slavish attentions she receives, and lays claim to them ; at this period she surrounds herself with a parasitical suite ; she quarrels with the lady of the vice-governor ; she brags of St. Petersburg ; speaks with disdain of her provincial circle, and finally draws upon herself the utmost universal ill-feeling, which is kept up till the day of her departure, when all goes into oblivion, every thing is pardoned, and everybody bids her farewell with tears."

"Two persons do not form the whole society of a town," interrupted again Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"Patience, brother, patience ! Certainly there are other persons besides the two I have just spoken of : there is the vice-governor and his lady ; several presidents, with their respective ladies, and an innumerable crowd of functionaries serving under their leadership. The ladies are ever quarrelling in words, whilst their husbands do the same thing upon foolscap. The presidents, for the most part, are men of advanced age and business-like habits, with great crosses hanging from their necks, and are during the day-time to be seen out of their courts only on holidays. The government attorney is generally a

single man, and an enviable match. The superior officer of the *gens-d'armes* is 'a good fellow.' The nobility-marshal* a great sportsman. Besides the government† and the local officers, there live in a government town stingy landowners, or those who have squandered away their property; they gamble from evening to morning, nay, from morning to evening too, without getting the least bit tired of their exercise. Do you play whist?"

"No."

"And *preference*? ‡"

"Neither."

"Then you have nothing to do in a government town. But stay, you have perhaps matrimonial projects?"

"Heaven preserve me!"

"Then, most decidedly, my dear fellow, you have nothing to do here. They would marry you by force. We have a most abundant store of young

* The nobles of every Government in Russia elect by ballot every three years a Marshal for every district of their province, and a Grand-Marshal for the whole Government. These marshals represent the nobles, and discuss and manage all local matters of public utility.

† Gubernia is the term expressing a province, and of which there are forty-nine in Russia.

‡ A game at cards, combining whist and Boston.

ladies : they all, by an instinctive inspiration, sing Warlamow's songs, and entertain themselves by talking about the delightful amusements at the Moscow Assembly-rooms. There is in every government town a dowager with two or three daughters, obliged to vegetate there after a protracted brilliant life in the capital ; the other ladies generally make merry at her expense, but, nevertheless, they try to get invitations for her whist parties : in government towns, you know, only young ladies do not gamble, and even they often play '*fools*' for filberts and sweet-meats. There are, further, to be found in a government town some officers on furlough ; some toad-eaters, without property or taste ; there is a wit, who composes poetry for solemn occasions, and invents nick-names ; an old doctor, two young ones, an architect, a land-surveyor—"

"Now, about the mode of living ? " asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"The mode of living is a very dull one. An exchange of ceremonious visits. Intrigues, cards, cards, intrigues. Now and then, perchance, you may meet with a kind, hospitable family, but such a case is very rare ; you much oftener find a ludicrous affectation to imitate the manners of

an imaginary high life. There are no public amusements in a government town. During winter a series of balls are announced to take place at the Assembly-rooms ; however, from an absurd primness, these balls are little frequented, because no one wants to be the first in the room. The '*bon genre*' remains at home and plays whist. In general, I have remarked, that on arriving in a government town, it seems as if you were too early or too late for some extraordinary event. You are ever welcomed : ' What a pity you were not here yesterday ! ' or, ' You should stay here till to-morrow. ' ”

“ All that is very well ; I do not, however, understand,” said Ivan Vassilievitsch, “ why you remain living here ? ”

“ Why ? Alas, brother, that is a simple and silly story ! ”

“ Let us hear, then, this simple and silly story, pray.”

“ It is, friend, a story which many of us noble-men can tell. First wealth, then poverty. First life in the capital, then a make-shift one in a government town.”

“ But how do you account for that ? ”

“ The reason is, that our levity borders on

madness. We are, from our cradle, infected with a common malady ! ”

“ Indeed ! and what is that ? ”

“ Its name is simply *living above our means* ! ”

“ Now for your story, Feda ! ”

CHAPTER VII.

A SIMPLE SILLY STORY.

“WHEN we parted on leaving school, where I’ll say it in a parenthesis, we both learnt very badly, I went to St. Petersburg, of course intending to get into state service. To live in St. Petersburg and not to serve, is as much as to be in water and not to swim. The whole of St. Petersburg is an immense office, and even its buildings with their formal walls and legal windows look as if they were ministers, directors, presidents, and secretaries. The streets themselves are, as it were, divided according to ranks into honorable, right honorable, and most noble. Upon my soul, it is so. I arrived in St. Petersburg with the firmest conviction that as soon as I should appear every one must of course remark me, and that necessarily I should have, in a short time, a most bril-

liant career. You recollect, friend, that at school I wrote poetry, I thought consequently that I should be able to write clever business papers. But imagine my disappointment ; at my first trial I wrote such a farrago that the head clerk burst out into a fit of laughter and directed me to copy other papers. And not only the minister and the director, but even the chief of the section never spoke a single word to me ; my brilliant abilities were left in complete darkness. The thought consoled me that it was the envy of my comrades which checked my rising ; and on the other hand I got the conviction that in state service, as in all other things, ' Charity begins at home.' State service, friend, is a ladder. Upon this ladder creep and climb men in green clothes, now pushing each other, then losing hold through inattention to the rounds, and catching hold of the coat-tail of a more clever equilibrist. There are few who go steadily up without help ; few think of the common wealth ; every one of his own ; every one tries to get a cross to be able to give himself airs of importance before his comrades ; every one endeavours to fill his pockets as much as he can. You must not think that St. Petersburg functionaries take bribes. Beware ! Don't confound the

St. Petersburg *tchinovnik* with the one in the province. To take bribes is a mean, dangerous, and not all sufficiently profitable transaction; are there not better by-ways leading to the same point: loans, speculations, shares, &c? By these means, and with the smallest influence, a nice fortune is very soon accumulated, and honour preserved intact."

"Proceed."

"Seeing my ambitious hopes blighted regarding my situation in the service of the state, I decided to shine in the fashionable world. I met with the same disappointment. I thought I was rich and found that I was poor. I expected to strike every one by my carriage and my mode of living, and found that my fortune was quite beggarly in comparison with that of the greater number of the persons moving in the same circle. I was compelled by a stupid presumption to imitate the luxuries of others, not at all regulating them by my means. This is a universal fault in St. Petersburg. Life there is like fireworks, much brilliancy, much smoke, and after a while nothing is left. Every one does his utmost to surpass his neighbour; every one is a copyist: one class copies the other, poor people copy rich

people. The one who is not wealthy assumes the appearance of wealth and gets ruined ; the one who is rich offers so much to luxury that he inevitably gets ruined too. It seems as if our nobility was seeking poverty ; and, indeed, see what different things have rendered themselves as indispensable for us as bread and water ; for instance, the crowd of our house-serfs, the legions of men in liveries, a thick-bellied major-domo, stewards, butlers—some thirty or forty men in all ; then our mansions, with drawing-rooms, dining-halls, studies, dancing *salons* ; our coaches-and-four, opera boxes, dresses, cards ; in one word I must say that in St. Petersburg luxury is the first necessary of life. People there think first of what is not necessary, and then of what is ; therefore you every day see noblemen's estates sold under the auctioneer's hammer. And then what passions rise from a discordance between income and expenditure ; to what doleful scenes they lead in families ; what a number of persons have for ever lost both the quietude of their conscience, and their self-esteem and honour. Life in the capital, like a deluge, carries away with it every one, everything, without giving you even time to see your position. However such is our constitution. Before all we seek

diversion and pleasure without having either sound principles or high aims for our life. First, we are badly brought up ; secondly, we don't understand how to resist temptations, and although having before us daily warning examples, we do not follow them and do not improve. It is a sad thing this. However, friend, you yourself are a Russian nobleman, and I need not therefore enter into longer details about how our folks ruin themselves, you must know it as well as I do. There may be in our complete neglect of calculation some Slavonic boldness, or it may have some remote relation with our country's vast and flourishing nature. Be it as it may, the luxury in St. Petersburg has become an absurd folly ; no one dares to set forth the first example of good sense and reason. Usurers grow rich, fashion reigns and everybody bows to her unconditionally, and sacrifices on her altar even to his last penny. It is, therefore, that there are nowhere any family reminiscences ; you will not find in a single house any ancestral traces, no grandfather's arm-chair, not a single relic from the forefathers. Fashion, in her current, sweeps everything away. The beautiful St. Petersburg, upon my word, looks like a city lent on hire. As regards myself, I did

what my comrades did. I incurred debts and spent thrice my income. That however must not astonish you, for there were friends of mine who had no income at all, and who nevertheless spent three times as much as I did; how they managed to do so I do not comprehend, but it's a fact. I was everywhere well received. I courted the ladies *en vogue*. I listened to their nonsense, answered them with the same, and by every possible means tried to enjoy myself. I must however confess that amidst this forced everlasting dissipation I felt most unhappy. Like the rest of our young men I was longing for and was displeased with something; I thirsted after some imaginary activity; in a word, I felt myself useless, superfluous, and imputed to others my nullity. I laboured under a spleen that is common with us, and decided to marry."

"What! are you married?" asked Ivan Vasilievitch.

"Yes, I am married, and yet as if I were not," answered his friend with a deep sigh. "It is the same simple and silly story.

"The girls in St. Petersburg," he continued, "are beautiful. It is a delight to look at them.

Their hair is so artistically braided, their forms so admirably moulded, and then they dance so gracefully, and so much, that it is an utter impossibility not to fall in love with them. I therefore also fell in love. My passion began with a valse, a mazurka decided my marriage. My sweetheart was the daughter of a very rich man, who gave gorgeous dinner parties and played every night at whist what is called the grand game. I was preparing to be happy. But in St. Petersburg, friend, a wedding is a half-way to bankruptcy. I think there is in the whole world not another place except St. Petersburg where, approaching to happiness, you beforehand try wilfully to spoil happiness, and preparing yourself for ease, you betimes annihilate all possibility of being at your ease. In St. Petersburg custom is law ; however absurd the general custom is, you must follow it. We have for everything conventional rules as stringent as visiting and bowing. In this manner then a bridegroom takes upon himself to imitate the universal ridiculous extravagance without regarding his means. In the first place come the usual presents ; his portrait by Sokolow,* a diamond bracelet, a sentimental

* An eminent portrait-painter to the Imperial Family.

bracelet, a Turkey shawl,* a diamond trinket, besides innumerable glittering costly trifles from the English magazine ; then the bridegroom is obliged to furnish anew, from garret to cellar, a house which is not his own, to fill it with costly shrubs and flowers, lent on hire ; to set up elegant carriages, thorough-bred horses, and solid silver harness ; he must dress his whole household in new gold-laced liveries, must buy new plate, new bronzes, new china, must prepare himself to give gorgeous banquets, and scarcely married, he remarks that he has nothing left to pay for the banquets. As for the bride's father, he furnishes the bed-room of the newly-married couple in such a princely style as to give to the bridegroom an example for the folly he has to pursue ; besides he fills chests of drawers and presses, trunks and boxes with all kinds of frippery, which under the name of the dowry sweeps away an enormous sum, and having done all this he presents the bridegroom the next day after the wedding with—his entire confidence : he avows with the utmost candour that life in St. Petersburg is very expensive ; that his

* A Turkey shawl is considered as an indispensable article in the trousseau of a young lady who has the least pretence to fashion. Its price varies, and often is as high as 300*l.* or 400*l.* sterling.

French cook ruins him ; that he has bad luck at cards, and concludes his confession with the remark that the newly-married couple must wait his decease before they can enjoy the promised annuity. Rather disappointed by such an unexpected revelation, the son-in-law on his part likewise acknowledges the bad position of his circumstances, and before a week has past quarrels for ever with his new relatives.

“ Thus was it with myself. I wanted to return into the province. My wife was against it ; she had not been educated for a life in the provinces ; she was accustomed to take her daily walk on the Nevsky-Perspective, to go daily to a ball or the theatre. What could I do against that ? It was then, friend, that began my galley-life. In a life above your means there are moments of indescribable misery. Whilst your wife dressed in the most elegant style of costly fashion flirts in her opera-box with empty-headed dandies, there is no fire-wood in the house ; whilst half-a-dozen friends have announced to you their intention to dine at your house on such or such a day, your cook* refuses to furnish you with any more victuals ;

* Many families to save themselves one part of the troubles of housekeeping make agreements with their *chefs de cuisine*, who furnish the different meals at so much per head.

he is even rude to you, and you cannot dismiss him because you owe him money. It is a dreadful confession, friend, but in the present state of St. Petersburg life it is not only impossible to uphold your dignity, but even, strictly taken, it is almost impossible to remain an honest man : above everything, and at any cost, you must obtain money and spend it for rubbish. You are dancing in the evening, and in the morning your ante-room is crowded with creditors, usurers, and other visitors of the same class ; you mortgage, you sell, you borrow ; you put your name to bills of exchange and notes of hand ; you sell trinkets, horses, plate, shawls ; you curse your existence and want to lay violent hands upon it ; you are in despair and tempted to send a ball through your brains ; and amidst all these tortures you still remain laced, and scented, and curled, you bow, pay and receive visits, whilst you are firmly persuaded that no one likes you, and that every body is laughing at you.

“I had lived two years of such a life, when I began to remark that the world was looking at me with a kind of contemptuous and insulting pity. I got fewer bows ; I was often omitted to be invited to parties ; I was no more sought as a

partner in a mazurka, and little by little all my friends abandoned me. 'It is his own fault,' they said, 'What folly to climb higher than he can! Why live amongst us?' Even persons, for whom I felt a sincere affection, whom I loved like brothers, even these turned their backs upon me as soon as they knew that they could win no more money from me at cards, nor have a good dinner at my expense,—and not only did I see on their part no token of interest, but I knew that they were proclaiming my ruin with a somewhat strange officiousness and a malicious display of wit. This discovery was more than I could bear. I hated St. Petersburg and decided, cost what it might, to leave it. I sold all I could, settled all the bills I could, brought my affairs into the best possible order, and one fine morning set off, accompanied by my wife, to Moscow."

"Did you live in Moscow?" asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"Yes. In Moscow it was all the same: the same continuation of the simple and silly story. My wife insisted upon residing if not in St. Petersburg, at least in Moscow. She did not allow me even to think about the province. And so we settled at Moscow. I love Moscow the

white-walled ; her venerable Kreml with its numerous glorious monuments. Moscow is the heart of Russia and this heart throbs with every noble feeling to all that is national ; uprightness prevails in its lower laminæ ; in the higher circles there shine many talented, well-intended spirits, animated with love for useful knowledge and with an eager desire of pursuing some beautiful and national aim. This I discovered but too late !—I happened to fall into a peculiar class of society which in a large town ever forms, as it were, a little town for itself. The little town I was moving in is a town of half-pay,—a country of mustachios and laced coats ; a refuge of discontented spirits ; a den of the strangest plunderers ; a forge of the strangest intrigues. Its inhabitants are late government-officers discharged for irregularities, or having left the service of their own accord, a choleric people, deceived by ambitious hopes,—for the most part a lazy set of ill-wishers. Their idle babble has rightly stamped upon their town the nickname of '*the Old Woman*.' Babbling—before all, above all, and at any cost whatever : such is their chief occupation. You may hear there, that a grey wolf goes about on Smith's-bridge and peeps into

the shops ; that the Sultan has affiliated the Pope ; they have politics of their own, a Europe of their own construction. This, however, is not the greatest evil. Idleness is the beginning of all vices. I will tell you my first *debut* in the white-walled city.

“ A short time after my arrival I was taken by a friend to an agreeable party. This party was like a corporation of idlers, a chamber of toad-eaters ! On my entering, every present eye surveyed me askew as if I were a beast of show, and then they began to whisper amongst themselves. A gentleman with a large tuft of flaxen hair approached me and introduced himself as knowing my father, as having been a fellow-officer of my uncle’s, and even as slightly recollecting my grandfather. ‘ These reasons,’ he said, ‘ give me a right to offer you a piece of advice. Do you see that gentleman with the enormous black mustachios ? Take care of yourself,—he is sure to propose to you a game of cards, and will inevitably cheat you.’ I expressed my liveliest thanks to the friend of my family and walked into the other rooms. Imagine my surprise when the gentleman with the enormous black mustachios follows and begins a conver-

sation with me. 'Have you long known that flaxen tuft of hair?' he asked. 'No, sir, I just now made his acquaintance.' 'You must take care of yourself, he wants to cheat you at cards. I hold it my duty to warn you, because your dear aunt honours me with so much kindness, and besides I think we are kinsmen.'

" 'What does this mean?' I thought to myself, and I began to listen with more attention to the conversations carried on around me. And such words, such open confessions did I hear, that my hair stood on end! Some of them, secretly free-thinkers, humbly bowed to the police-masters; others spoke with much glow and in great ecstasy of *kule-bakas** and kidneys; others bragged of their abilities for hard drinking; one gentleman related with much wit how he once got flogged; and others spoke about such extraordinary mysteries, which they said had lately occurred in Moscow, that even Sue, methinks, would have hesitated to communicate them. They talked about hounds and women, with this distinction, however, that the former were spoken of with a greater deference. The elder gentlemen played whist, and were constantly quarrelling.

* A piece of rice and salted salmon.

The so-called *infernal* room was occupied by desperate gamblers with pale faces and hollow cheeks, who were playing the high game. Round the tables a crowd was standing looking on with envious avidity, and base rapture, at the blind chances of the game. Heaps of bank-notes were lying on the green cloth, and the sombre stillness was only interrupted by an occasional blasphemous exclamation from a loser. And what did many a one lose there besides money ! I saw likewise many persons sitting quietly in a corner, silent and shrugging their shoulders : they seemed to have grown accustomed to this mode of living, and by force of habit scarcely found in it anything prejudicial ; they fraternised here with many a man to whom they would refuse admittance even into their servants' hall. This is easily explained. St. Petersburg vices originate from a too intense activity, from the mania of display, from vanity and false ambition. Moscow vices originate from a total absence of activity, from the want of any object in life, from idleness and tedium. Of course, this is not applicable to the whole society, but to the small part of it which is the most spoken of : there are everywhere good and clever men, but they generally keep away from

the bustle, and are with difficulty led into new acquaintanceships, whilst the rabble at the first glance strikes your eye, and misleads to different follies such simpletons as, for instance, I have ever been. By degrees I got accustomed to my strange circle of acquaintances ; I knew them all personally, and thereby got more familiar with their faults. I candidly confess to you, friend, that I no more dreaded the atrocious revelations I every day heard. I comprehended the reigning philosophy, and left off frequenting the few respectable and hospitable families I knew; until at last, upon a certain evening, I sat down to a game at cards with the black mustachios and the flaxen tuft of hair.

“ As a matter of course, I by degrees lost all the remnants of my fortune ; as for my daily comrades, they became exceedingly familiar with me : they tapped my shoulder, called me by all sorts of affectionate names, and overwhelmed me with every possible sign of friendship. This did not please me at all ; but when I endeavoured to check their friendly demonstrations, they felt insulted, and wanted to pick a quarrel with me. The flaxen tuft, upon one occasion, called me a spy ; the black mustachios began to scandalise my

wife's reputation. I boxed the black mustachios' ears. We were separated, and settled to meet the next morning, at day-break, in Marina Rostscha.

“I went home, and—would you believe it, friend?—I began now to feel that I loved my wife, and that, if we had been properly educated, we could have been happy together; our hearts were not spoiled, it was only bad habits we had to reform; in one word, it was a want of steady, sound principles, a longing for worldly diversions, that had led both of us astray. My wife is pretty, and besides that—a St. Petersburg lady: she was received in Moscow with rapture and envy, elevated to the skies whilst present, and trampled down behind her back. This, however, is the same everywhere, and with every one. My wife did not think it necessary to be over cautious: she happened to dance several dances with a certain officer. A couple of ladies maliciously remarked it, two or three wags made a joke about it, and up grew the mote to a mountain. The next day you might hear in the Tverskoy, that my wife had an acknowledged paramour: in the Dmitrierka, they said she had two; in the Arbat, three. In a week or so, when this news had

reached the other side of the river, my wife's paramours had grown to a fabulous number. The Moscow ladies related with much sentiment and wrath, quite impossible facts, each of them adding a word of her own. As it travelled on, the word grew an anecdote, the anecdote a romance, till at last the monstrous Moscow Gossip had a heavy account against my wife.

“When I came home, after my stupid quarrel, I had an explanation with my wife. She cried and complained of the malicious gossips; I, likewise, felt a tear rolling down my cheek, because I knew my guilt: I reproached myself with having squandered all I had, and being now reduced to poverty. It is strange: at this very moment we became friends, we forgave each other, we understood and loved each other; there was, however, no possibility left for us to continue living together. Suddenly we hear a knock at the door: ‘Who is there?’ A police-officer and two gend’armes. They had a warrant to seize me, and bring me without delay to Vladimir.

“A cart with posthorses stood ready at the door; I was obliged to get into it, and under military escort off I went. My wife lives with her father in St. Petersburg, and I, friend, live here under

surveillance of the police. I lounge on the boulevard, and admire the fine views. That is the end of my *simple and silly story*. Now come along with me to smoke a pipe at my lodgings."

"Thank you, Feda, but it is impossible; I am sure my old gentleman is waiting for me; he may get angry."

"Come but for a few moments."

"No, indeed, I cannot. Walk with me to the hotel. I am sure the old gentleman is in a passion."

And so it was. Vassily Ivanovitsch was already perched on the tarantas, and grumbling between his teeth about the thoughtlessness of young men. Ivan Vassilievitsch, in the twinkling of an eye, was in his seat, and the tarantas moved on down the hill into the misty country.

CHAPTER VIII.

GIPSIES.

IN a corner of a room in a country inn Ivan Vassilievitsch was sitting, musing pensively about something or other. The book for his "*Travelling Impressions*" lay before him in its primitive virginal whiteness.

"What is the reason" he thought, "that all our expectations in life, all our wishes and hopes ever remain unaccomplished? We reckon upon one thing, and get another, something quite the contrary of what we expected. Our imagination paints every thing in bright and pleasing colours, and in the result it congeals into one dim mass of dull reality. Now, for instance, myself—I longed to see the West, to breath the air of the South, to meet the sages of our times, to fathom European civilisation, to admire its actual glory ;

I wanted to see closely every thing which men boast of, and with which they glorify themselves. And I wandered all over Europe, I saw numbers of hotels and steamboats, and railways ; I visited many a dull Museum, and could find no where those lively impressions I thirsted after. In Germany the practical foolishness of the learned men surprised me ; in Italy I felt chilled with cold ; in France disgusted by immorality and dirt. Wherever I went, I found the same base cupidity for gold, the same gross self-complacency, the same signs of corruption, and the same ridiculous pretensions to perfection. How could I help taking a lively liking for my own country, and coming to the conclusion that I would sacrifice the remainder of my life to the acquisition of the knowledge of my fatherland. It were, methinks, a praiseworthy and easy task !

“ But there arises now the question, How can I learn Russia ? I first sought for her antiquities ; there are no antiquities. I thought to study life in the provinces ; there is no life in the provinces : every one there is said to be of the same cut. Life in the capitals is not a Russian life, but a weak imitation of the petty

perfections and gross vices of modern civilisation. Where am I then to find Russia? In the lower classes, perhaps, in the every-day life of the Russian peasant? But have I not been now for five days chiefly amongst this class? I prick up my ears and listen, I open wide my eyes and look, and do what I may, I find not the least trifle worth noting in my '*Impressions.*' The country is dead; there is nothing but land, land, land; so much land, indeed, that my eyes get tired of looking at it; a dreadful road—waggon of goods, swearing carriers, drunken stage-inspectors; beetles creeping on every wall; soups with the smell of tallow-candles! How is it possible for any respectable person to occupy himself with such nasty stuff? And what is yet more provoking, is the doleful uniformity which tires you so much and affords you no rest whatever. Nothing new, nothing unexpected! To-morrow what has been to-day; to-day what has been yesterday. Here, a post-stage, there again a post-stage, and further the same post-stage again; here, a village elder asking for drink-money, and again to infinity village elders all asking for drink-money. What can I write? I begin to agree with

Vassily Ivanovitsch ; he is right in saying that we do not travel, and that there is no travelling in Russia. We simply are going to Mordassy. Alas ! for my '*Impressions.*' "

Scarcely had Ivan Vassilievitsch ended his lamentations, when the landlord of the inn, a handsome tall fellow, with blue eyes, and a small brown beard, entered the room. Involuntarily Ivan Vassilievitsch admired him, highly pleased with the manly beauty of the Russian nation ; and eager after knowledge, he began a conversation with him.

" Tell me, friend, is yours a district town ? "

" Yes, sir. "

" What curiosities have you got worth seeing ? "

" What curiosities should we have, sir ? I think there are none. "

" Have you any old buildings ? "

" No, sir, no old buildings ? By-the-bye, there has been an old gaol, but it was burnt down last year. "

" Had it been built a long time ago ? "

" No, sir, not very long ago ; but the wood was rotten—the contractor had supplied bad materials. It was lucky that it burnt down ! "

Ivan Vassilievitsch gave a look of despair.

“Are there many inhabitants in your town?”

“Yes, sir, a good many of us, and besides, there are government officers.”

“A mayor?”

“Yes, sir, a mayor, a judge, a sheriff, and others—a complete set of officers.”

“How do they spend their time?”

“They go to their offices, sir; they drink punch, play cards, and—now, sir,” added the host with a smile, “we have a gipsy-camp before the town, so they go every day there. Just as if they were Moscow-gentlemen or merchants’ sons. They get up such feasts and revels, that it is a real delight: the judge plays the fiddle; Artamon Sidorovitsch, the sheriff, dances the hornpipe; and the quantity of drink they take there, you have no idea, sir!”

“Gipsies! gipsies!” exclaimed joyfully Ivan Vassilievitsch, jumping from his chair. “There are gipsies here, Vassily Ivanovitsch! Gipsies! The first chapter for my ‘*Impressions*.’ Gipsies—a wild, unbridled, wandering tribe, who feel suffocated in towns, who long for the free air, for life in the forest, in the open field; for whom liberty is the greatest blessing—the first

necessary! And by what accident are the gipsies here?"

"They are detained by order of the authorities, sir. People say the secretary has demanded for their free passage a half-imperial for every cart: vagabonding, you know, sir, is not allowed. Either from simplicity, or because they had not the money to spare, they did not give what the secretary asked; and so they have been detained now for six months already, under watch of the police, sir."

Ivan Vassilievitsch's ecstasy felt a drawback. Nevertheless he continued cutting a pencil to record his "*Impressions*."

A heavy step was heard from the next room, and in walked the smiling features of Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"Gipsies," he said, "pretty gipsies! Bravo! It is just as if we were in Moscow or at a fair. Bravo! Are there pretty women amongst them, eh?" he asked, winking with his left eye, and smiling significantly.

"There are all sorts, sir," answered the host; "there are pretty ones too. Steshka, for instance, sir, is such a splendid woman—a regular brick, sir; and does she not drink! The attor-

ney gives every thing he earns to Steshka: they say he entirely ruins himself for her. Then there is Matroshka, who is the sheriff's, and Natashka, such a beautiful singer, and so touchy. The judge, they say, offered her a thousand. 'I don't want your thousands,' she says. A voice like a nightingale's. However, gentlemen, if you would like to hear them sing yourselves, it is but a short distance. If your honours order, I'll conduct you there."

Ivan Vassilievitsch looked at Vassily Ivanovitsch.

Vassily Ivanovitsch looked at Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"Let us go," said Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"Let us go," said Ivan Vassilievitsch.

Off they went.

Half way there, Ivan Vassilievitsch suddenly stopped.

"I hope," he said, "we shall not meet any of the officers?"

"No, sir, they are all in the courts."

"Come along then."

At the very outskirts of a forest, on a large field, in a picturesque disorder, was the gipsy-camp. Carts with canvas spread from one to the other, loose horses, brown-coloured children

upon feather-beds ; steaming cauldrons, disfigured old women in ragged cloaks and with dishevelled hair,—every thing looked strange and striking. Ivan Vassilievitsch enjoyed the sight exceedingly, and although he was obliged to stop his nose, the attractiveness of the uncommon event, and the hope of being able to commence his “*Impressions*,” disposed his mind to the kindest indulgence.

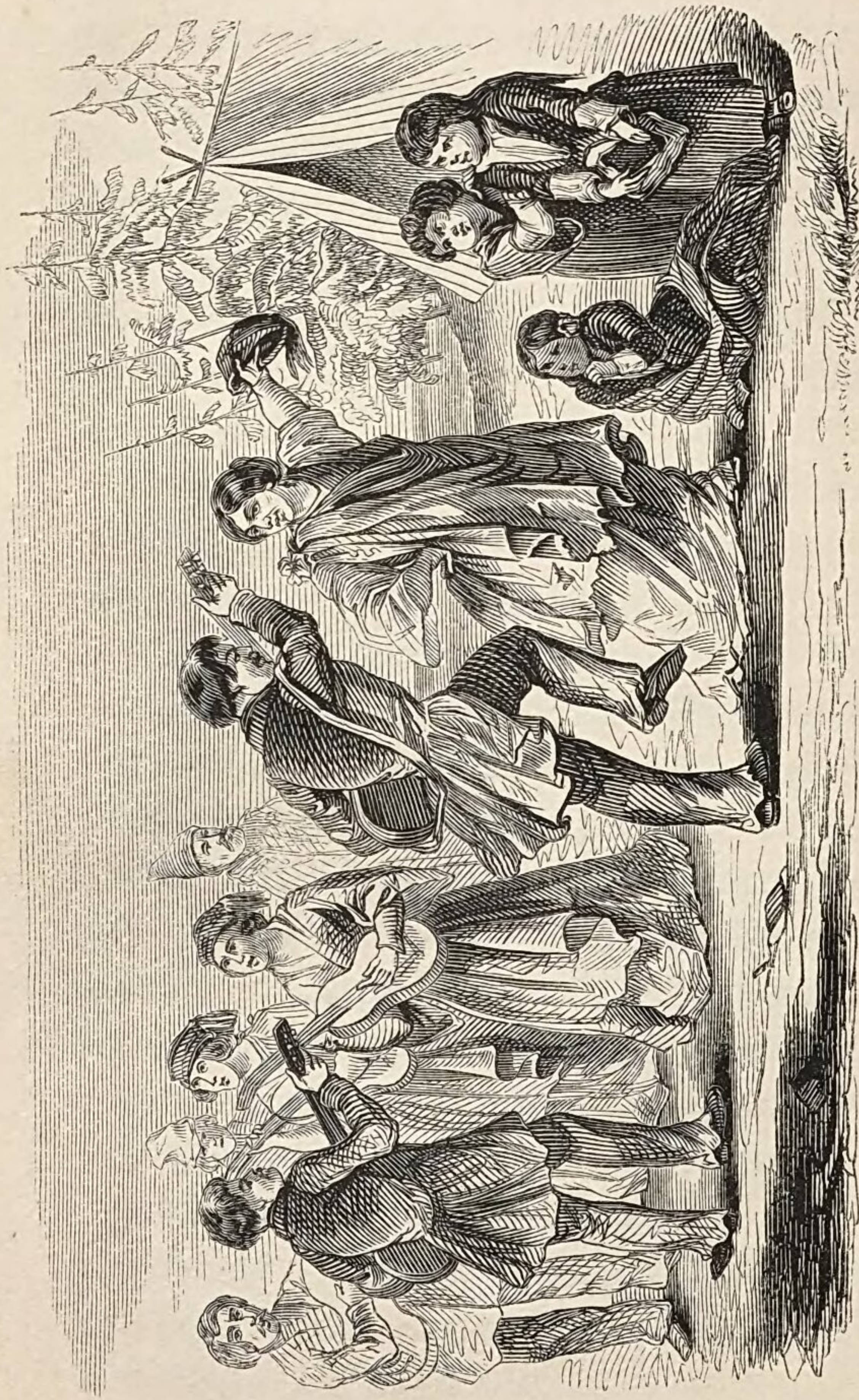
Vassily Ivanovitsch puffed and hurried on.

“Hallo ! you wood-peckers !” exclaimed their conductor. “Come out, devils, quick ! Don’t you see that gentlemen are come to see you.”

The whole camp swarmed. Old women ran from one cart to another, calling the young ones—young women, in a hurry, dressed themselves behind the canvas screens—children jumped about—the men bowed low and tuned their guitars. “Quick, quick, women ! the gentlemen are waiting,” cried the chief. And out rushed a crowd of gipsy women, dirty, ragged, dishevelled, in old chintz gowns and ragged silk aprons.

Ivan Vassilievitsch was stunned.

“What ! even amongst gipsies you find European fashions ! Even they have not been able to preserve their primitive features ! Alas ! for Gitanas,



Russian Gypsies Dancing.

Esmeraldas, Preciosas ! Look there—Esmeralda is attired like a *lionne* of the Smolensk market ; Gitana is draped in a gauze gown stolen in Basmannaiia-street !”

However, that was not the worst. At a given sign the gipsies began, in a most shrieking voice—not a gipsy nomad song, but a Russian vaudeville madrigal—accompanying their singing with the most uncouth gesticulations.

“Where is their independence ? Where is nationality ? Where in Europe are they to be found, when gipsies themselves don’t possess them !”

The book of “*Travelling Impressions*” dropped out of Ivan Vassilievitsch’s hand upon the turf.

It was quite different with Vassily Ivanovitsch. He was in ecstasy ; he moved about his shoulders, stamped the time with his foot, and even now and then assisted the singers in a hoarse voice. He was drowned in delight. The gipsy women had surrounded him on all sides ; they called him their beau, their sun ; they told him his good fortune, and prognosticated immense riches. The drunken Steshka was dancing before him with waving arms ; Matroshka was shrieking as if her throat was being cut ; and finally the whole gang

gave a vociferous cheer to Vassily Ivanovitsch. And Vassily Ivanovitsch smiled, and, quite forgetting his Avdotia Petrowna, emptied his purse amongst the crowd.

“Well, children, that was capital!” he said. “Bravo! Now for a song; ‘Forward, lancers,’ or no, ‘Would you believe,’ a splendid song. Thank you, children. Ivan Vassilievitsch! Ivan Vassilievitsch!” he called to his companion, “What, are you standing there like a wet hen? Look at your right-hand neighbour—don’t you see?—the one with a crimson neckerchief. What’s her name?—I forget. Natashka,—yes! Is she not beautiful,—isn’t she?”

Ivan Vassilievitsch felt first provoked by this interruption, and then he felt quite melancholy. He looked at Natashka.

Natashka, notwithstanding her strange costume, was indeed a beautiful girl. Her large black eyes sparkled like flashes of lightning; her dark features were regular and tender, and a set of pearly teeth sharply divided her coral lips.

Ivan Vassilievitsch took out of his neckcloth a golden pin, and approached the fair gipsy. “Natashka,” he said, “you are born a gipsy—remain a gipsy; don’t wear these absurd aprons; don’t

disdain your tribe ; don't sing Russian romances. Continue to sing your own national songs, and in remembrance of me accept this trifle."

The gipsy quickly stuck the pin into her neckerchief, looked at the young man half gaily, half pensively, and answered him in a low voice :

"I am fond of our songs, and shall wear your pin. I won't forget you."

Ivan Vassilievitsch then stepped aside ; he felt, if possible, still more melancholy, when suddenly a voice behind him asked :

"How do you like the singing, sir?"

He turned round ; behind him stood their conductor, smiling and looking at him cunningly. "Don't they sing well, sir ? The old gentleman," he continued, pointing at Vassily Ivanovitsch, "seems to be highly pleased."

Ivan Vassilievitsch was tired, he wanted not to speak and to go away. With much pains he succeeded in dragging away Vassily Ivanovitsch, who, amidst the wildest vociferations, reluctantly left his brown enchantresses, throwing to them, in his ecstasy, a red bank-note out of his pocket-book.

They then departed towards the inn.

"Don't they sing beautifully?" continued their

restless host. "It is only a pity that they are under watch, the poor souls! However, it is a different thing being under arrest in the open air, in the forest, from sitting in a prison, as, for instance, it happened to me to sit."

CHAPTER IX.

THE RING.

“HAVE you been in prison?” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch, with eagerness.

“Yes, sir. I have, I confess it, and quite innocently.”

“What for?”

The smart host passed his hand over his brown beard, twisted his mustachios and smiled. His blue eyes sparkled with cunning.

“For the wife of the police-major,” he answered.

“How so, for the wife of the police-major?” inquired Vassily Ivanovitsch with a laugh, that shook his whole body: “for the wife of the police-major! Is that a possible thing? I think, friend, you are a jester. But let us hear your story.”

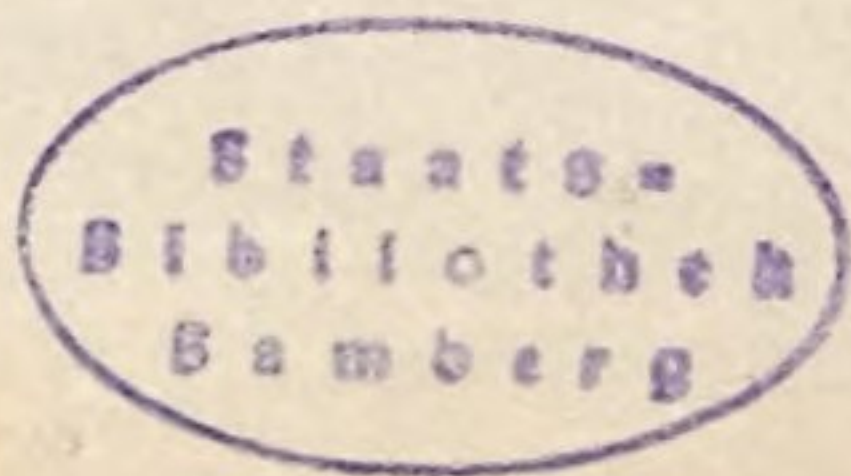
“With pleasure, sir, with pleasure! You see,

gentlemen, I keep an inn for the accommodation of travellers. Every one is welcome; the tea-urn is always boiling, and my fruit-brandy, I must remark, makes every mouth water. The brandy I keep only for a treat, gentlemen; we are not allowed to retail any. However, who is sinless before God, or guiltless before the Czar?—Kind people (Lord keep them in good health) do not forget me: I have always plenty of customers. On my ground-floor, you have seen, gentlemen, I keep a shop with everything in it for the peasant's household; and groats of every kind, and gloves, and sashes, and horse-collars, and plums—everything you may ask for.

“Some three or four years ago we got a new police-major; Such a little round creature he was—quite a tun; besides, he was no longer young, and was addicted to hard-drinking. ‘A nice major we have got there,’ we said amongst ourselves. ‘What is, however, to be done? Be he as vile as he may, he still is a major!’ We could not help it, and so we all went to welcome him in his new office; one brought him a pound of tea, another a loaf of sugar, a third, other ware out of his shop. It was quite right we should compliment him on his arrival amongst

us ! Well, gentlemen, whilst we are all standing in a line, every one in his newest clothes, with our bread-and-salt in each hand, the police-major in his dressing-gown was pacing like a peacock before us and gathering our presents. I recollect it now, gentlemen, as if it had happened but yesterday ! when all at once Fedka Sidorin gives me a push with his elbow : ‘ Look,’ says he, ‘ his wife peeps through the door ; oh ! and what eyes she has ! ’ Why should I not look at the major’s wife ? I looked, and a true poppy-blossom I beheld ! Such red cheeks, and the eyes—eyes like burning charcoals ! The devil tempted me, gentlemen ; I felt quite amazed by her beauty. She must have remarked it, because she suddenly shut the door and disappeared.

“ From that day, gentlemen, I confess I became quite stupid : no sleep, no appetite—I felt quite wretched. I was only thinking about some pretext to go to the major’s. Now I run to him : ‘ Your honour,’ says I, ‘ the neighbour’s swine are trespassing upon my grounds, please to give your orders to have them shut up ! ’—Then I run to him : ‘ The tax-collectors, your honour, are making a noise and asking for brandy, but they won’t pay for it : they say they are government-people, and



must have some!’ Then again I run to him : ‘Your honour,’ says I, ‘the wheel of the fire-engine is broken, who is to pay for repairing it!’—I was never wanting an expedient to go to the major’s; and of course I always tried to go at a time when I knew he would be senseless from drink. Knock! knock! and out comes Maria Petrovna wrapped up in her *Kazaveika*.* ‘What do you want?’ she says, ‘His honour,’ says I.—‘He is not well,’ says she; ‘he has a headache, and has laid down a little.’ Hem! thinks I, we understand the headache.—‘I beg your pardon, madam,’ says I, ‘I’ll come a little later. Pray inform his honour that Ivan Petrow Fadeieff has called.’

“Well, gentlemen, but little time had passed before Maria Petrovna began to promenade before my shop, and enter into conversation: ‘Very cold to-day, isn’t it?’ says she. ‘Yes, madam,’ says I, ‘we had a hard frost last night.’

“In a short time the major himself began to look in at my shop:—‘I feel so chilled, Ivan Petrow; have you not a drop of brandy to warm me?’—‘Certainly, your honour,’ says I, ‘take it

* A kind of cloak lined or trimmed with fur, which women of all classes throw over their shoulders, without using the sleeves.

for your health !’—and such brandy it is, gentlemen ! . . . I give him a glass, and a second, and a third, till at last the major got so warm as not to be able to walk straight home. By such means I grew into the major’s friendship every day. I heard all day long : Ivan Petrow, give us a look up ! Ivan Petrow, come in the afternoon to take a glass of punch !—From morning till evening I got invitations to come to the major’s. And that’s what I wanted ! It was water to my mill.—As soon as I knew that the major was out—hush—I called. In one word, gentlemen—” Here the narrator smiled, and stopped short. “ In one word, gentlemen,—but I won’t enter into details. One or two months passed, when one fine morning I sit in my shop, according to my habit, and see the major come up, panting. He entered.

“ ‘ Good morning, Ivan Petrow,’ he says.

“ ‘ Good morning, your honour,’ says I.

“ ‘ Devilish cold to-day ! Have you got a drop to warm me ? ’

“ ‘ Certainly, your honour ! ’—Well, I take a glass, fill it with my brandy, and with a bow : ‘ Please your honour, to relish it for your health,’ says I. And he gets quite crimson, and his eyes

like two pewter-spoons. Good Heavens! what's the matter with the major? He stares at my hand as if he were thunderstruck! I myself looked upon my hand to know what the matter was. The deuce take it! I had forgotten to take the ring off my finger!

“I must tell you, here, gentlemen, that Maria Petrovna had made me a present of a gold ring, with a blue flower upon it, which she asked me to accept in remembrance of her, and not to let her husband see it.

“As soon as the major had left my shop, I thought that matters stood badly; so, off I run over ditches and fences to the major's wife. ‘Misfortune, Maria Petrovna, misfortune!’ I cry to her, ‘take back your ring!’

“Scarcely had I returned to my house, when I was seized by three police-soldiers, and conducted towards the gaol. ‘How dare you,’ says I, ‘lay hands upon a merchant's nephew?’ They did not heed my expostulations, however; I was fettered, and put into a dark room of the gaol.

“It's an unpleasant pastime, gentlemen, to sit in a prison! It's so close, you scarcely can breathe. Fetters on the hands,—you want to

lift up your hand up, and cannot; you would like to lay down, and cannot; you are hungry, and there is nothing but bread and water!—No, gentlemen, Heaven preserve any one from prison!

“In less than an hour the whole town was saying that Ivan Petrow had stolen a ring at the major’s. I was, thank God, a general favourite, all good people were fond of me; so, they went to the town-major, and asked him to hold court. Our major, such a kind-hearted gentleman, went himself to the police-major’s, and took with him his secretary and an attorney. I was sent for, and escorted by a party of soldiers was brought up like a criminal. I was quite ashamed before the people.

“‘The police-major,’ says the major, ‘accuses you of having stolen his wife’s gold ring with blue stones.’

“‘I never stole anything, your worship,’ says I. ‘Who is the man in our town that can say Ivan Petrow is a thief and a dishonest man?’

“But the police-major was unremittingly growling out: ‘He is a thief!—he is a thief!—he is a thief! It was but yesterday that I saw the ring on Maria Petrovna’s finger! Please to ask her yourself.’

“The police-major called in his wife. ‘Here,’ says he, ‘but yesterday, on this very finger—damnation! it is there again!’

“‘What ring are you talking of?’ asked Maria Petrovna. ‘I had missed no ring of mine; here is the one with the cornelian, here the one with the blue stones. You ought to be ashamed of yourself,’ she added, addressing her husband; ‘to drink so much as not to know what you are talking of.’

“The police-major stood gaping, and quite stupified; the major, secretary, and attorney seemed to have fathomed the real state of the matter; they first interchanged a few smiles, and soon after burst out into a tremendous fit of laughter.

“I was acquitted and set at liberty, after an admonition from the major: ‘Be this a lesson for you,’ he said, ‘not to wear rings, not to court married ladies, but to choose a wife of your own, who would aid you in your household.’

“‘Very well, your honour,’ said I, and out I bolted homewards. And there was such a feast that evening at my house, gentlemen, as never before had been witnessed. All the neighbours remained banqueting till the next morning.

“A couple of days later, both the police-major and Maria Petrovna left our town.

“As for myself, gentlemen, I soon after married neighbour Sidorin’s daughter, and for the last three years we have lived together, thank God, quite comfortably.”

CHAPTER X.

ABOUT LITERATURE.

OUR travellers were going along the sandy highroad. The tarantas rolled on at a slow pace.

“I confess,” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch, yawning and stretching himself, “I confess that I find it a very dull journey, ours, and the country all around us is far from being picturesque. To the right—flat! To the left—flat! On every side it is alike! Could we not find something to divert ourselves with?”

“Let us read something,” said Ivan Vassilievitsch.”

“Well, let us read something! I like to read now and then, when I have nothing better to do. And, then, they do certainly write sometimes very amusing books! Allow me to ask you, —perhaps you write yourself?”

“No, sir, I don’t.

“And very well it is you do not. It is not a nobleman’s occupation to write books. And then,” he added, with a significant sigh, “it is not every one who is endowed with talent.”

“For literature, as it is at present, no talent is requisite,” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“Yes! so it is,” continued he, after a pause; “at present no talent is requisite—you only want courage. Literature is now a handicraft like a shoemaker’s or tailor’s. Authors are nothing more than literary-ware manufacturers. They will soon introduce the custom of having at their doors sign-boards, like pastry-cooks and bakers!”

“Well, upon my word,” interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch, “I think you are now talking nonsense.”

“Indeed I am not—I speak the truth. Don’t you know what piteous, silly schemes are often concealed under high-sounding names? You may believe, if you like, that literature is the expression of the spirit and the life of a nation; you may put faith in its grand vocation to instruct man, to reform vices, and to direct the soul towards pure enjoyments. All this is Utopia! Literature is one of the thousand means of making

money, and all the beautiful feelings, all the deep thoughts that abound in books, may be reduced to bullion and bank-notes. Annihilate the sale of books,—and literature will disappear. In our commercial age, poetry is offered in shares, and prose is farmed. We shall soon see established literary factories, where you may buy ready made thoughts and feelings, at a fixed price, according to their value, as you now buy a coat or a pair of trowsers at a tailor's ! ”

“ Last year,” interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch, “ I bought in Smith's-bridge a wrapper, and, what do you think—it was not worth anything ! The rascally Frenchman cheated me ! ”

“ Just in the same manner are you cheated by those whose books you often peruse with pleasure. Without suspicion you buy a coat, and your coat proves to be made of rotten material. Our tailors and our literary men have acquired a prodigious skill in cutting out to pattern ! Anything suits them—politics, religion, morality, legal questions, philosophical problems, and more than all these, love-intrigues of every possible kind. Look at the present literature in Europe : it is like the scenery of a booth at a fair. You feel quite disgusted at it : everything before you is rouged, everything

is painted and sham ; everywhere tinsel and foil, everywhere a greedy eagerness to catch the public. The public, however, is not easily to be caught—but coldly passes by literature, as if she were a mendicant, now and then throwing her a stray penny. In reality the world is so very old and experienced, that, with a little bit of conscience, he can no more make a plaything of literature. Europe's pure feelings are stifled by vices and calculations ; she feels no longer her imperative mission—the outpouring of uncounterfeit and virginal impressions. From time to time, of course, you may meet with a single man animated by a noble flame ; but how can these few restore what is for ever lost. Can you make a royal robe out of rags ? On the other hand, you ought to find in a country in many points yet virginal, in a country which has not yet quite lost her primitive nationality, in a country as powerful as Russia, limpid, clear sources of her own—not troubled by the mud of a corrupted civilisation ! ”

“ So ! ” said Vassily Ivanovitsch who had listened rather negligently, and did not understand a single word. “ Are you fond of our Russian literature ? ”

“Heaven preserve me!” replied his companion with vivacity. “I did not say anything so absurd. Besides, about which literature do you ask? We have two kinds.”

“How so—two kinds?”

“Yes, we have one which is liberal and generous, but has now grown tired; showing herself but seldom amidst the people, sometimes with a smile on her face, but oftener with a heavy sadness in her heart. The other, on the contrary, is to be met with at every street corner; she cries and makes a most tremendous noise, lest people should not think her genuine. This literature reminds me always of the bawling second-hand clothesmen of Apraxin-court,* who are ready to lay hold of every passer-by to sell him their rotten ware. Upon my soul, I have never seen anything more surprising, more monstrous and disgusting than this spurious literature.”

“How so?”

“Because, in reality, it is no literature; it is but a false name. Our really talented authors have always avoided the least contact with her, for fear of being thought to share in her strange doings. She is nothing else than a parasite fungus

* The greatest frippery-market in St. Petersburg.

upon the national soil. She has neither aim nor principle. There are a great number of subdivisions in this literature, as it were separate little literatures: there are several in St. Petersburg, several in Moscow, several in the provinces, and in each of these literatures there are different factions, who in ant-like fashion move about and busy themselves like Gulliver's Lilliputians, zealous members of a dissevered body—they regale Russia with verses *à la* Lamartine, with dramas *à la* Schiller, with novels—piteous parodies of foreign works, already in themselves caricatures—and last, though not least, with the monstrous indecorums which appear under the pretext of criticisms. Thank Heaven, however, nothing of all this is genuine Russian! A true Russian will never discover his native genius in silly mountebanks, like these, who jump about and make gestures before him; and believe me, that at the rag-fair of the collectors of other people's skill, a true Russian will never answer a call uncongenial to him. That is not what he wants! He wants native sounds, native pictures to make his heart throb and his soul grow bright; he wants you to talk to him in his own tongue of his favourite traditions, of the wise and un-

sophisticated customs of his dear fatherland, of the exigences of his real life. But alas! our traditions and our customs are fast disappearing. All that lives in the memory of a nation, all that may serve as a foundation for a national literature—all is losing itself every day, and with every new change of our habits. The genius of Russia is expiring, stifled with what is continually thrown upon him! Poor child! he wanted only to grow and assume an air of dignity, he wanted to make his sonorous voice heard,—and we have put upon him a French wig and a German dress, we have wrapped him up in a harlequin dress, and don't see that the poor boy is wasting away, and weeping tears of bitterness. What remedy is there? you will ask. The answer is not difficult: liberate the child; throw into the fire all that theatrical frippery, and turn back to our natural, native principles. Civilisation it was that separated us from the people; let then civilisation couple us together. Who knows: perhaps in some peasant's hut is concealed the embryo of our future greatness? the more so as it is now only in the peasant's hut, and even there, only in the remotest wilderness, that you can find genuine, primitive, untouched nationality!

“Men of conscience ! Do not look for native inspirations in the drawing-rooms of St. Petersburg, where people speak only French and dance in the French style ! Believe me, much easier will you find them in a poor hut, covered with snow, where, lying on a warm stove, a blind centenarian may narrate to you, with youthful vivacity, glorious traditions of the olden times. Hasten to listen to the old man’s story, for to-morrow he may die, and who shall preserve his revelations.

“Much has already been lost in that way ; our antiquities disappear, and take away with them our nationality. And what do we get in exchange ? No healthy food, no sound fruit, but moral rags, rotten fallen fruit ! Would it not be far better to throw out of the window all our literary rubbish, and to set off with perseverance, and string together, word by word, all we may meet with, not like some fashionable lady, afraid of simple rusticity, but holding precious, like true Russians, all we may find genuine ! Through the knowledge of our antiquities we shall come to the knowledge of our language, of our national spirit, of our national wants—and we shall have then a literature of our own, self-depending, full of life and vigour, the reflection, not of an imita-

tive faded impotence, but of a useful, industrious progress ! It will be an object of national pride, of national enjoyment, of national accomplishment !—I have got rather heated,” continued Ivan Vassilievitsch, “but am I not right ? Confess, Vassily Ivanovitsch !”

He got no answer. This eloquent soliloquy, like everything else connected with Russian literature, had produced upon Vassily Ivanovitsch the usual effect : he slept the sleep of the just.

CHAPTER XI.

AN ARISTOCRAT.

THE weather was gloomy. Rain and fogs alternately enveloped the dreary country as if in damp clothes. The high road wound along like a dark brown riband. A wet jackdaw sat on the top of the solitary milestone. On both sides lay extensive ploughed fields, and now and then a low fir-wood. Even Nature seemed to find time hang heavy upon her hands.

Vassily Ivanovitsch, wrapped up in a morning-gown and an *ergak*,* lay upon his back, endeavouring by force of will to overpower the jostles of the tarantas, and to fall asleep in spite of the bad road. Ivan Vassilievitsch, in his borrowed coat with its hare-skin lining, looked with much displeasure at the grey sky, and whistled lowly,

* A warm, close-fitting under-coat.

“*Nel furor della tempesta*,”—as we know already, an Italian air of which he was very fond.

Time never goes so slowly on as on a journey, especially so in Russia, where there is little diversion for the eye, but many jostles for the ribs. In vain Ivan Vassilievitsch attempted to discover a subject for his “*Impressions*.” Everything around was lifeless. The only living beings our travellers had encountered were a barefoot peasant, with his bass-shoes* hanging at his back, who bowed to them with great politeness as they passed, and two labourers’ ponies with fettered forelegs, near a hurdle fencing, who greeted their passage with a few odd jumps. Ivan Vassilievitsch was at one moment tempted to take hold of his book of “*Travelling Impressions*,” and to throw it with disgust into a ditch, when suddenly he gaped, opened wide his eyes, and extended one hand. He perceived in the distance some strange heap, as if it was a huge spot on the dark brown riband. Ivan Vassilievitsch shook himself.

“Vassily Ivanovitsch ! Vassily Ivanovitsch !”

“What, friend ?”

“Do you sleep ?”

* Matted shoes worn by peasants of both sexes.

“Who, the devil, could sleep here?”

“Look on the road.”

“What’s there to look at?”

“There is somebody coming.”

“Probably trades-people going to the fair.”

“No, it looks like a carriage.”

“What! a carriage? Indeed, so it is. It must be the Governor.”

Vassily Ivanovitsch at this suggestion adjusted his travelling costume, changed his lying position into a sitting one, set right his cap, which happened to find itself on his left ear, and screening his eyes with one hand, he slightly raised himself from his feather-couch.

“It is decidedly a carriage—and standing still besides. Probably something broken—a wheel, may be. These spring-carriages are always out of repair—that’s the advantage of a good tarantass; no repairs, no upsetting, and whenever the road is good it is like a rocking-chair.”

Meanwhile they came nearer to the object of their curiosity, and found it was an elegant carriage, a travelling *dormeuse*, standing in the middle of the road. There were neither in the fore nor back-ground any trunks tied up with ropes, no hampers, no mat-bags, those indis-

pensable travelling companions of a genuine Russian. The carriage, except the splashes of mud which covered it, looked ready for a *promenade*. Out of one window looked a gentleman, in spectacles, in a red Turkey cap, who was scolding his servants by the most opprobrious names, as if it were their fault that a spring had broken in the London-made carriage.

“Hallo!” cried he to the occupants of the approaching tarantas, rather in an uncivil tone. “Lend a hand here, if you please.”

“Halt!” exclaimed Vassily Ivanovitsch.

Ivan Vassilievitsch uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“Prince! you here—in Russia?”

The Prince looked somewhat suspiciously at this unexpected acquaintance, and through a whiff of his cigar, he inquired: “Do you know me?” Ivan Vassilievitsch hastily dropped his hare-furred cover, jumped out of the tarantas, and went near the carriage-window.

“How are you, Prince? Don’t you know me again? I am Ivan Vassilievitsch. We met last year at Paris.”

“Ah! is it you? *Que diable!*—who would have thought of meeting you here?”



The Encounter.

“And you, how do you happen to be here? I thought you always lived in foreign countries!”

“Indeed I am a sinner in this behalf! In my soul I am a Russian, but it is impossible for me to live in my own country. You understand me. I am so much accustomed to civilisation, to intellectual life, that it is an utter impossibility for me to breathe without them. Eh! you brutes!” he added, addressing his domestics: “Let this yamtchik help you—but make haste! I’ll give you five hundred lashes, you rascals! What were you looking after? Alas! Russia,—*Cara patria!*” he continued with a contemptuous expression, and turning again to Ivan Vassilievitsch: “This is the only language they are able to understand; they cannot make a single step without the whip. I have left my own attendants abroad; these are domestics who had served my old father.”

“And where are you going now?” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“Don’t ask me, pray. It is so provoking, that I won’t speak about it. I am going to my estates. I could not help it—the steward does not send me any rents—the devil knows what stuff he writes: a failure in the crops in one village—

another estate burnt down. What do I care about all this nonsense? As if I had no business of my own, and had only to care about that of my peasants: they may live as they like, if only I regularly get my income. I know them well! Heaven help me with the rascals! they think that whilst I am in foreign countries they have nothing to do but to cheat me. I know, however, what I shall do; I'll send the sons of my steward into the army, and the non-payers to the workhouse. I'll make them give me a whole year's income in advance! And what are you doing?"

"I intend to travel a little about."

"What! in Russia?"

"Yes."

"An original idea! what do you expect to see here?"

"Many a thing you don't meet abroad."

"Indeed? I wish you much pleasure and success. My maxim is—*Mourir pour la patrie*, living, however, in foreign countries."

"There is no doubt," remarked Ivan Vassilievitch, "that life abroad is the pleasantest."

"Not everywhere; in Germany, for instance the winters are extremely dull: you meet nothing but philosophers, sages, artists; every step you

make you are sure to encounter a pedant of some sort. Paris—is a different thing ; Paris has something to suit every taste. A summer past in Baden, one winter in Paris, the next in Italy—that's the life for me ! Do you recollect the little Duchess of Benville ? ”

“ Certainly.”

“ She is now *en liaison* with a countryman of ours—Sereja.”

“ Indeed ? bravo for our countrymen ! ”

“ As to our Russian ladies there, I won't say a single word about them—they lead such a gay life ! Do you recollect——.”

Here the Prince whispered something in the ear of Ivan Vassilievitsch.

Ivan Vassilievitsch interrupted him with the exclamation :

“ Is it possible ? she too ? ”

The Prince smiled in answer.

“ Well, Prince, and what are you yourself doing ? ” Ivan Vassilievitsch asked.

“ I vegetate ; too late to get married, too soon to get steady ; I cannot serve, because I am too fond of comfort. In short, I kill my time as well as I can. Pray, who is the strange figure sitting in your britzka ? ”

“ In the tarantas,” corrected Ivan Vassilievitsch in a mutter.

“ You call that thing a tarantas ? Ta—ran—tas. Is it right ? ”

“ Yes.”

“ Ta—ran—tas. I’ll not forget the name. Well, who is it ? ”

“ It is Vassily Ivanovitsch—a landowner from Kazan ; rather clumsy, and quite an original, but nevertheless by no means stupid.”

“ Really ? I have never seen such a strange figure before ! Well then, are you ready ? ”

“ Quite ready, your Highness.”

“ Good-bye then, my dear friend, I hope we may meet again in Paris. Don’t forget—*Rue Rivoli, No. 17*. I hope in a fortnight to be able to leave Russia—to tell you candidly, I have got quite unaccustomed to Russian manners. Good-bye ! good-bye ! Move on,” he cried to his yamtchik ; “ and you, Stepan, give him now and then a kick in the ribs, that he may well whip his horses.”

Stepan’s clenched fist prepared to comply with his master’s order, and off the carriage flew, splashing with mud the tarantas and our travellers.

“ For heaven’s sake,” asked Vassily Ivanovitsch,
“ for heaven’s sake tell me, who was that ? ”

“ A friend of mine from Paris.”

“ A Frenchman ? ”

“ No—a Russian ; only he does not reside in
Russia ; it disagrees with his constitution.”

“ So ! where is he going to now ? ”

“ To his estates, to collect arrears.”

“ And where are his estates ? ”

“ In the Government of Saratow.”

“ There has been a complete famine in the
Government of Saratow for the last three years.”

“ He does not care about that—he won’t hear
anything about bad crops ! ”

“ So ! and when he has succeeded in squeezing
his peasants dry, he ’ll return to France ? ”

“ Without a moment’s loss.”

“ Pig ! ” energetically remarked Vassily Ivano-
vitsch, and dropped on his feather-bed.

One hour—two hours passed. Our travellers
seemed musing about something or other, when
at length Vassily Ivanovitsch broke silence with
the somewhat strange soliloquy :

“ The devil knows—a curious set of people
they are, the Russian noblemen—as if really they
had too much money, that they go to scatter it

among foreigners, for fear a crumb may fall to their countrymen. They surely must obtain abroad curiosities such as we cannot afford to offer them. Tell me, brother, do people abroad, walk as we, silly ones, do,—on their legs?”

“Quite in the same manner.”

“Indeed? and they get married as we do—and die?”

“And die as we die.”

“Is it possible! However, I am sure there are no poor people, no persecutions, no misery?”

“You find all that.”

“You joke! But now tell me, what is the most remarkable thing you have learnt abroad?”

“Russia,” answered Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“What? Russia? Is it worth while to go so far for what you may see here?”

“Quite the contrary. You cannot duly understand and appreciate Russia without having seen some other countries.”

“I really don’t understand you, brother: explain yourself.”

“It is not difficult to explain this. You are aware that truth springs from comparisons; it is therefore by comparing our country with others that we are able to ascertain its endowments and

its faults. Besides, examples may show to us what is worth imitating, and what is to be avoided."

"And pray, what, according to your opinion, ought we to imitate?"

"Unfortunately, a good deal. In the first place, the spirit of nationality and of civil service, of which we are entirely deficient: we are accustomed to cast every thing upon the shoulders of Government, not seeing that Government needs implements to work with; if we serve, it is not because we feel it to be our duty, but we do it from motives of ambition, and although we love our country, we love it very very youthfully and inconsiderately. Commonwealth is with us a hollow sound, we do not even understand its meaning. Having then acquired the spirit of nationality, we shall get endowed with a longing for physical and moral improvement, we shall understand the value of sound education, and the great benefits to be derived from arts and sciences—and in a word, every thing that ameliorates and ennobles man. From Germany we may learn the duties and joys of domestic life; from France scientific inquisitiveness; from England commercial knowledge, and the real spirit of civil service;

Italy, herself, may transplant upon our frozen soil her divine arts."

"So! so!" muttered Vassily Ivanovitsch, "and what is it we have to avoid?"

"That which ruins Europe: the spirit of presumption, of haughtiness, and pride; the spirit of distrust and of suspicion, which checks progress; the spirit of enmity and dissension, which shakes every foundation. We must arm ourselves against German haughtiness, English egotism, French depravity, Italian laziness; and we shall have then before us such a path open, as no other nation has ever had. Behold the immeasurable extent of our country, and its gigantic structure; don't you get quite uneasy? but look, afterwards, upon the people that covers this land—an upright, good-humoured, clever people, firm in will, and herculean in strength, and you again feel easy. However, the best sign of Russia's present and future grandeur is—her powerful humility. We have not, as other countries, any high-sounding proclamations; we have no 'Much ado about nothing;' no sticking up before each other. We feel our power and—remain quiet, as if we wanted to apologise to Europe for possessing our acquirements."

“ Yes, yes,” interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch ;
“ and so, according to your opinion, that which
is the most worth study abroad is——”

“ The past.”

“ And in Russia ? ”

“ The future.”

“ So ! so ! I wonder how Government allows
such folks as you are, brother, to meander about
the world. You get such ideas, and talk so
ambiguously, that it is really difficult to compre-
hend you.”

“ Ay, Vassily Ivanovitsch, travelling harms no
one. A sensible man learns by travelling, and
may so become more useful, and as for fools, we
do not want them in Russia ; there will still
remain a sufficient number without those who go
abroad.”

Thus conversing, they, though slowly, still
advanced on their route. Night had passed
away, and through the misty morning atmosphere
they beheld the magnificent panorama which so
beauteously adorns the entrance to Nishny-Nov-
gorod.

CHAPTER XII.

THE MONASTERY OF PETCHORA.

SHOULD you ever be in Nishny-Novgorod, do not omit to visit the monastery of Petchora! You will certainly be much interested.

The approach to the monastery makes you feel so very light and peaceful!

At the first view of the gorgeous picture of Volga's shores, your whole soul seems to widen. You see to your left, at your feet, the beautiful river, so beloved by the people, and so celebrated by Russian traditions and songs; proudly she sports with her silvery scales, and glides smoothly and stately into the far distance. To your right, on the verge of a hill lie scattered amidst shrubs and copses of underwood, picturesque cottages, and behind them on a slip of land jutting out into the river, you behold the white riband of the

monastery's enclosure-wall, above which appear the domes of the churches and the cells of the anchorites.

Go up the hill ! a wide road will bring you to the gate of the monastery ; shake off from yourself all your petty, worldly passions, and—enter into the quiet place.

On every side long stone buildings meet your sight. In the middle of the extensive courtyard two old churches are united by a covered passage. Here, in these churches, mute witnesses of our forgotten history, under their heavy vaults, and behind their carved altar-screens, many a tear was shed, many a fervent prayer said, provoked by the attacks of the Tartars, and the invasions of the Poles.

The church-steps are overgrown with grass. White tombstones and crosses appear through a shrubbery. All is quietude and melancholy here—on the threshold of human vanity. The silence is only broken from time to time by the steps of some monk passing by.

The unpretending dwelling of the prior adjoins the refectory. It is a little, modest house—but what a view do you discover from its windows ! You see all the wealth of Russia from its old balcony !

On one side rises, on the high river-bank, the antique Kreml, whose scaly steeples outline themselves in the blue sky; thence the whole town extends, gradually inclining to the very bed of the river. On the other side,—the low bank—your eye embraces a picturesque country, with its numerous villages, watered by the mighty streams of the Volga and the Oka, which two rivers intermix their differently coloured waters at the very foot of the town, and form the promontory, upon which is held the fair, so well known to the whole world; on this point it is that Asia meets Europe; the east encounters the west; it is here that is decided the welfare of many a nation; it is here that lies the key to the riches of Russia. Scores of different races converse here in scores of different idioms; thousands of warehouses, full of merchandise attract tens of thousands of purchasers. The whole population throngs around one idol—the idol of commerce. Everywhere tents are pitched, booths and stalls put up; on all sides your eye sees boiling tea-urns, Persian, Armenian, and Turkey kaftans intermixing with European dresses; on all sides cases, casks, bags, with merchandise of every different kind: diamonds, tallow, books, tar, iron, silk and wool,—in a

word, every thing that man trades with. The same upon the water ; the Volga and Oka flow side by side, covered with innumerable masts, and variegated flags, like two armies boasting before each other. Vessels of all names, from all the ends of Russia, with cargoes from distant China, and our own produce, some yet uncleared, others awaiting their sailing for the Caspian Sea, or the insatiable St. Petersburg.

What two beautiful pictures, and what a striking contrast ! Below—life with all its boisterous passions ; above—the quietude of the cell ; there—mutability, fear, suspicion ; here—a peaceful conscience and the word of forgiveness on the lips. And every morning and every evening, the prayers of the holy friars rising to heaven, above the nothingness of worldly vanity.

And at night, when the sky is sown over with myriads of stars, when the moon peeps into the deep waters of the Volga, and the melancholy song of a bargeman reaches your ear from a distance, how very peaceful do you feel on this spot ! What beneficent freshness your soul gets, what quiet, bright happiness fills your whole being ! Trust me, friend, if ever you should be in Nishny-Novgorod, it will be

worth your while to visit the monastery of Petchora !

Besides, when you enter the monastery, you are involuntarily transported into other ages, to other customs and another life. A curious skeleton of a lost history as it were arises before you. You see the antique sacristy, antique furniture, antique rolls ; you stand amidst half ruined buildings ; you live a life gone by, and the few remains of our national art mournfully reproach you for your unpardonable neglect.

These are no empty words I speak. Arts existed amongst our ancestors, and if they did not appear to have been systematically cultivated, yet they manifested themselves distinctly by many a specimen of artistic skill : our songs, our holy pictures, and our beautifully engrossed manuscripts may serve you as examples. Architecture has left yet more striking remains, so numerous and so beautiful, that our new buildings, buildings without any character and originality, alien to the Russian spirit and wants, appear beside them quite meaningless and out of place. Here the question arises : Is national architecture possible for us, and how may we find its principles and form its rules ? It is only by studying and analysing the

remaining antique monuments ; and strange as it may appear, we find the most striking indices, at the first glance, in the two kinds of buildings, that have retained their primitive characters : the churches and the peasants' dwellings. And so it should be ! Let the church and the peasant's cottage serve as the foundation of Russian art, even as faith and nationality serve as the foundation of Russian glory !

In examining these buildings in their minutest details, we find nearly the whole past history of our fatherland : shrines, cornices, balustrades, roofs, windows, everything belongs to some particular epoch, and reminds you of some particular historical incident. Here, as in everything else in our country, Europe is in close contact with Asia ; eastern arabesques are not seldom interlaced with Italian ornaments. It is equally a remarkable fact, that our temples have externally the form of Asiatic minarets, owing to the invasion of the Tartars, whilst internally they are still pure Byzantine—a symbol, that although foreign foes could subdue our country, their conquest was only an outward one,—at the bottom of her heart our holy Russia has never betrayed her religion, as she shall never betray her vocation !

In general I may say that three principles predominate in our national architecture : the Byzantine or Greek, imported with the Christian faith in the times of Vladimir ; the Tartar or corrupted Arabian ; and lastly the principle of the *Renaissance*, borrowed from the West in the reign of John the Terrible. The study of these different principles, and of their mutual combinations ought to be the first thing attended to by our builders ; it would be, methinks, a glorious task for them to regenerate from small ornaments, detached parts and minute trifles, scattered over the whole of Russia, the vanishing art, and to give to the newly constructed buildings those wonderful original forms, which so highly astound the traveller ; let them preserve those fantastic scaly roofs, those japanned window-sills and tile cornices which give to the building a look of so much picturesque peculiarity. May architecture begin the regeneration of national art in Russia—painting, sculpture, and music will follow its lead—they will perpetuate our life and our glory, and bind us with new chains to our beloved fatherland.

To return, however, to the monastery of Petchora. Its history is to be told in a very few words. Formerly it was rich—now poor. In

old times it possessed 8000 souls, and had many donors, whose names are all preserved in the ancient books, that prayers may be said for the repose of their souls. Now, the estates of the monastery are in other hands; the munificent donors have vanished; the prayers alone have remained unaltered. The most ancient records of the monastery date from the times of John the Terrible, and contain the names both of Boyars* and peasants, the highest persons and the lowest. And what valuable historical secrets, what glorious feats and high thoughts may be connected with all these mute names, so indiscriminately inscribed upon the yellow parchment leaves of the monkish records!

The monastery of Petchora has stood in the same shape as now we find it since the fourteenth century, at no time interfering in the world's transactions, but ever praying for the souls of those whose names were connected with them. History records that, during the invasion of the Tartars, the monastery was pillaged, and further, we are informed that in the year 1596 the whole ground upon which it is built slipped down a declivity of some 500 feet. This phenomenon

* A Russian nobleman of olden times.

was considered by the whole of Russia as an evil omen ; nothing, however, followed to confirm the ill-boding. Since the time that the Abbot Theodosius in the seventeenth century persuaded the Prince Posharsky to deliver Russia from the then heavily oppressing yoke of the Poles, history has entirely forgotten the monastery of Petchora ; it stands silent and mournful ; it has had every experience during its existence : civil wars and Tartar attacks, Polish scimiters and nomad pikes ; it has seen old Russia, it sees present Russia, and the same unvarying toll of its ancient bells, that called our forefathers to prayers, sends its melancholy sounds to our ears.

Friend, be advised, and should you ever be in Nishny-Novgorod, visit the monastery of Petchora !

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MODEL LAND-OWNER.

SLOWLY the tarantas rolled on the main road to Kazan.

“ Vassily Ivanovitsch ! ”

“ What, friend ? ”

“ Do you know what I am thinking of ? ”

“ No, friend, I do not. ”

“ I am thinking—you must be an excellent landlord. Is it not a very difficult thing to be so ? ”

“ Live some twenty or thirty years amongst your peasants, and you are certain to become a good landlord. ”

“ Thanks for the counsel ! ”

“ I'll tell you something that no foreigner is able to understand. If a Russian peasant had his choice between a good steward and a

bad landlord, which do you think he would prefer? ”

“ Of course a good steward.”

“ You are quite wrong ; he will prefer a bad landlord : ‘ though bad,’ he says, ‘ he is still our own ; he is our father—we are his children.’ There ; understand the Russian peasant if you can ! ”

“ It is true,” replied Ivan Vassilievitsch, “ there exists between the peasantry and the nobleman a certain mysterious and holy tie, an unaccountable affinity, not understood by other nations ; it is an echo of patriarchal life, so uncommon in our age ; it is no sad relation of the weak to the strong, of the oppressed to the oppressor, but an affinity which manifests itself freely, and from the bottom of the heart by a feeling of submission, and not of fear, by a full conviction that both master and man have holy duties to perform towards each other, and have to protect and help each other in any case of emergency.”

“ Yes, so it is, indeed,” interrupted Vassily Ivanovitsch, “ The peasant wants to see the lord for whom he works, and he wants too, that the lord should see his labour ;—he is then full of gaiety and diligence, and works with success.

‘ After God and the Great Czar,’ he says, ‘ law ordains me to serve my master ; I am his, as he is mine !’ Such is the peasant’s motto.”

“ And by what rules are you guided in the management of your property ? ”

“ What rules ! friend ? Habit, enterprise, and God’s holy will. I see that every peasant is punctual in his duties ; punish beggary, and look with both my eyes that no one’s household and husbandry is allowed to be out of repair or order.”

“ How do you see to that ? ”

“ I take care that every peasant has his cottage, a good shed, two horses, one cow, ten sheep, one sow, ten fowls, two carts, two sledges, one plough, one harrow, one scythe, two sickles ; he must always have two *dessiatins* of winter or of spring crops in the earth, and sufficient pasturage for his cattle. If he has anything besides all that, he is a wealthy peasant, if he wants a single one of this list, he is poor. It is, as you see, no complicated mechanism. My chief rule is, that everything must be in order and complete. Has a peasant’s horse died—I give him a horse, and he pays me for it by small instalments ; is it a cow he wants—I give him a cow. The principal thing is—

not to allow anything to be neglected ; it is very easy to sink an estate irretrievably. Then again, let the peasants remonstrate as much as they like against it, do not heed it, but establish a common field and a common capital to provide for the tolls and all the other expense, which affect the peasants.”

“ And how do you arrange the management—the jurisdiction ? ” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“ I leave it to the community. Do you know, friend, that we have, in regard to the jurisdiction, such an order established, that no German, nor even a Frenchman, could invent a better one. Look, how peaceably and justly the peasants divide every year the land amongst themselves ; listen to their judicious and wise verdicts in any case of dispute.”

“ I think these sessions of the community must date from the most ancient times,” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“ I don’t know, friend, and do not care about it ; my business is, that my peasant should be satisfied, and in good health ; that he should accurately pay his poll-tax, and duly labour on my field : when he has worked three days for me, he may go and do what he pleases. I doubt if

the labourer is so well off in your foreign countries, friend? The Germans and Frenchmen pity our peasants so much: 'Poor martyrs,' they call them, but behold—the 'martyr' is healthy and in good spirits; he is well fed, and well clothed; he has not to pay, as your labourer abroad, for land, and water, and air, and everything he wants, whether his crop be good or bad. Oh! these Frenchmen!" added Vassily Ivanovitsch, "don't they cry out that we are barbarians and cannibals! Awful to hear for a healthy ear!—but I suppose, friend, you like their babbling."

"Why so?" asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"Ar'n't you a liberal? All your young men are liberals. Nothing is right according to you, everything wrong, though indeed, should any one ask your advice how to do it otherwise, there you stand sticking fast."

"Have you many house serfs?" interrupted Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"A poor sinner I am on this point;—a great number of servants, and besides, Avdotia Petrovna has a fancy for home-spun linen, and home-woven carpets; and such splendid carpets too they make, that it is indeed a delight to look at them! Only a few days ago we sent one for a present to

the attorney ; such a carpet ! with a landscape, and a sportsman with his gun, and beautiful birds and flowers ! Well, would you believe it, the attorney says it is the first carpet in the whole district. Avdotia Petrovna is quite in ecstasy—it's a woman's vanity !”

“ Have you any factories ?” asked Ivan Vasilievitsch.

“ Heaven preserve me from such a calamity. It is now the fashion amongst our landlords to erect factories on an *economical* principle. The calculation appears quite profitable. It is your *own* peasant who prepares the timber, who builds the edifice, who works, who makes and repairs the machinery, and who brings the fabrics to market ; all is done by your *own* peasant—and therefore, it must needs cost you nothing at all. However, at the end, what is the result ? The labourer is taken away from his field, which is and ever ought to be his chief resource. The honest, hard-working ploughman becomes a drunken mechanic ; his children turn out, ragged, ungrateful wretches, whom the landlord is obliged to provide for, and who out of thankfulness become the most turbulent fellows in the whole village. The peasant's cattle is neglected ; his horses overworked ; all

his resources are injured. Such is the result of factories in a village ! No, friend, according to my ideas, you should only then establish factories, (and mind—establish them on a *commercial* footing, and not as noblemen used to do, as I have just said,)when your estate, by its local position, is suitable for such a purpose, when you have an abundance of timber and running water, and, above all, when you have a clear capital of your own—not borrowed ; it is only then that you may establish a factory. But then, you must become a manufacturer, and cease to be a farmer. No mixing of both. Don't exact from your peasant the smallest sacrifice, but recollect—that a factory on an *economical* principle is the shortest way to the peasant's, and thereby, to your own destitution."

"Is not the book-keeping in an estate a very troublesome and minute task ?" inquired Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"Not in the least ; Avdotia Petrovna is my only bookkeeper ; she has two books : one for the entry and expenditure of the stock, and another for the entry and expenditure of cash."

"Have you hospitals and asylums ?—have you Lancasterian schools for mutual instruction ?"

“ He, he, he ! brother, what is it you want me to have ! My head-physician is Avdotia Petrovna ; my schoolmaster is the sexton—and he has only two scholars, such pert boys they are too ; the others don’t like learning : ‘ Our fathers,’ they say, ‘ are no scholars, why should we be ? ’ ”

“ And what do you do in bad years ? ” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“ We depend on God’s mercy ! I have always got a provision of corn in reserve. As long as I have been living I hav’n’t borrowed from anybody. Some fifteen years ago, I recollect, we had a dreadful year—no winter, no summer crops. Well, sir, the peasants come to me whining : ‘ Help us, Vassily Ivanovitsch, help us, our father, we have nothing to eat ; we and our children are starving.’ I say to them : ‘ I have grain in reserve, live upon it as long as it lasts, and after that, God will help us.’ And God has helped too ; there was sufficient supply for all.”

“ But that is beautiful ! ” exclaimed Ivan Vassilievitch.

“ Not beautiful at all ! should I leave them to starve, or infest the high roads as beggars, and stop the travellers ? ”

“ What ! to rob them ? ”

“ No, not to rob them ; they beg for mercy’s sake. There came once to me a whole band from the neighbouring estate of a nobleman who constantly lives abroad, and does not care about his peasants a whit ; well, I gave all the grain I could spare—of course I gave it them upon the condition that they should return it to me, after the next good harvest.”

“ And did you get it back ? ”

“ To the last grain. It is true the price then was much lower, but my heart felt so happy to have helped them in the time of need.”

“ Your peasants must love you dearly ? ” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“ You will see it when we reach home ; you will see how they all will flock together, one with a goose, another with honey, a third with something else. ‘ Father Vassily Ivanovitsch is come ! Welcome to you, father ! Why did you stay so long from us ?—we felt quite lonely without you ! ’ ‘ Good day, children,’ I say, ‘ happy to be back among you ! Did you think about me, whilst I was far away ? ’ ‘ How should we not think about you, father ? ’ they’ll answer : ‘ Have you not saved my son from the conscription ? ’ says one : ‘ Have you not given me a cow ? ’ says

another: 'Are you not a kind god-father to my child?' says a third. 'Heaven bless you, our dear, true father!' "

Vassily Ivanovitsch's eyes sparkled. Ivan Vassilievitsch looked at him with veneration; at this moment the tarantas itself appeared to the latter, preferable to the most elegant London-built carriage.

CHAPTER XIV.

MERCHANTS.

THE next day about sunset the tarantas entered a small, somewhat strange-looking town. It consisted of a single street, on both sides of which, little wooden, grey-coloured houses welcomed the travellers. Most of the windows had broken panes, which were replaced by greasy paper.

“Is it a district town?” asked Ivan Vassilievitch, stretching his limbs.

“No, your honour,” answered the yamtchik, “it is a borough.”*

In the meanwhile, there appeared in the jostling of the tarantas an uncommon movement. His steady gait became as it were, timid and irresolute, as if he had committed some blunder. Is it pos-

* A place that has not acquired sufficient importance to be made a town.

sible that the tarantas, who never gets out of repair, is never upset, should want, like any common spring-carriage, a visit to the blacksmith's forge? The tarantas stopped sadly and gently, at the entrance of the post-house. Senka got down from his seat, walked round it, shook his head, and lifting up his cap, addressed Vassily Ivanovitsch with an unexpected speech :

“ The tarantas is broken, sir ; two versts more, and it will crumble to pieces.”

“ What?” asked Vassily Ivanovitsch with scorn, and yet full of dread.

Had Vassily Ivanovitsch been informed that his Avdotia Petrovna had met with some accident, it would not have struck him more than the present treachery of his ever faithful, darling tarantas.

“ What ? ” he repeated with evident emotion, “ what is it that has broken ? ”

“ As you please, sir,” responded Senka ; “ please to look yourself. The iron tire of this fore-wheel has burst, and three spokes in the left back-wheel are split.”

“ Well then, it must be mended ! ” said the master.

“ It must, sir.”

“Run instantly after a blacksmith; but make haste, blockhead!”

Senka bolted to fetch the artist, and the desponding travellers entered the post-house. The inspector was drunk and sleeping, his lady on a visit at the publican's.

For half-an-hour they awaited the arrival of the blacksmith; at last he appeared with his black beard, his black face and black apron. He asked for the job fifty roubles, but after a long bargaining, consented to make the repairs for the fifth part of the sum.

The post-inspector's assistant examined in the meanwhile our friends' passports, and at last said:

“Horses are ready, gentlemen, as soon as you order.”

“There!” exclaimed Vassily Ivanovitsch with scorn; “now, when we have nothing to go in, the horses are ready! The deuce take your horses! Ivan Vassilievitsch!”

“Sir?”

“Should we not drown our disappointment in a cup of tea? Hark ye, fellow! order the tea-urn to be made ready. You have, I hope, a tea-urn?”

“Yes, sir, a tea-urn there is, but there is no

one at present in the house to get it ready. The post-inspector himself is not well, his lady is out on a visit, and has taken the keys with her. But there is a tavern opposite, where you may find anything you want, gentlemen."

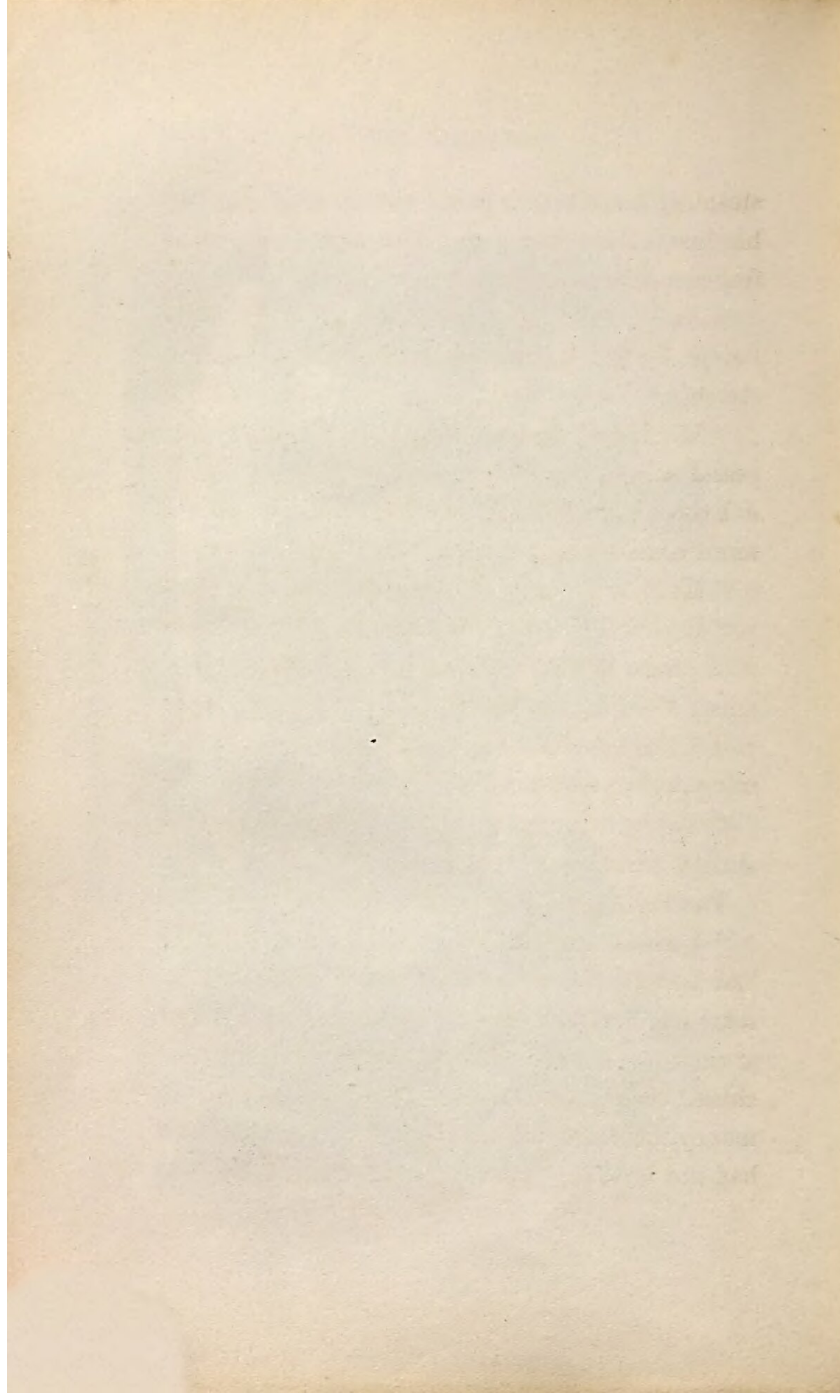
"To the tavern then," responded both our friends.

The tavern was like any other tavern, a large wooden hut, with the usual out-buildings. At the entrance stood an empty cart. The staircase was crooked and shaky, and at the top of it, like a moving candelabrum, stood a waiter with a tallow candle in his hand. To the right was the tap-room, painted from time immemorial to imitate a grove. Tumblers, tea-pots, decanters, three silver and a great number of pewter spoons, adorned the shelves of a cupboard; a couple of lads in chintz shirts, with dirty napkins over their shoulders, busied themselves at the bar. Through an open door you saw in the next room a billiard table, and a hen gravely promenading upon it.

Our travellers were conducted into the principal room of this elegant establishment, where they found, seated round a boiling tea-urn, three merchants, one grey-haired, one red-haired, and one dark-haired. Each of these was armed with a



Russian Merchants drinking Tea.



steaming tumbler ; each of them sipped, smacked his lips, stroked his beard, and sipped again the fragrant beverage.

“ And was it good flour ? ” asked the red-haired, at the moment when our friends entered the room.

“ Middling,” answered the grey-haired ; “ this year I sold it quickly enough ; it would be a sin if I complained. But, last year, O Lord ! I lost seven roubles on each bag ! ”

“ He, he ! ” remarked the red-haired.

“ It is impossible,” added the dark-haired ; it is impossible always to have a profit ; you must, of course, have losses now and then. Were you obliged to shift the flour often from one barge into another, then ? ”

“ Yes ! three times on the Volga alone ; so shallow was that river last year.”

The red-haired continued :

“ I made, last summer, a splendid bargain : I had bought from a company of Samara-Tartars, some five hundred bags of prime quality, and had at the same time a similar quantity, which I purchased from a nobleman who was in want of money, but such dreadful stuff it was, that if it had not been for the very low price, I would never

have thought of looking at it. What did I do? I mixed these two cargoes, and sold the whole lot to a brandy-contractor at Ribna for prime quality."

"It was a clever speculation," remarked the dark-haired.

"A commercial trick!" added the grey-haired.

Whilst this conversation was proceeding, Vassily Ivanovitsch and Ivan Vassilievitsch had taken seats at a separate little table; they had ordered their tea, and were listening to what the three merchants were saying.

A man at that moment entered the room, clad in a threadbare blue coat, he crossed himself three times before the holy pictures in the corner of the room, and bowing reverently to the grey-haired merchant,

"Our respects to Sidor Avdeievitsch," he said.

"Ah, Potapitsch! how are you. Take a cup of tea with us."

"Much obliged to you, sir. Are you quite well?"

"Thank God, quite well."

"And your lady and children? Quite well, sir?"

"Thank God, yes!"

“ You are going to Ribna, Sidor Avdeievitsch ? ”

“ Yes, to Ribna. But sit down, Potapitsch. ”

“ Do not trouble yourself, sir, we can stand ; I have a prayer to address to your honour, sir. ”

“ What is it ? ”

“ Would you have the extreme kindness to take with yourself a bit of money to Ribna for Trifon Lukitsch. ”

“ How much is it ? ”

“ Some five thousand and odd roubles, sir. ”

“ With pleasure, friend, with pleasure. ”

Potapitsch took from his breast-pocket an incredibly dirty sheet of paper, in which were wrapped up bank-notes and some gold, and handed it over to the grey-haired merchant, who, having counted them over, said :

“ Five thousand, two hundred and seventeen roubles. Is it right ? ”

“ Quite right, sir. ”

“ It shall be delivered according to your wish. ”

Sidor Avdeievitsch lifted up the long lap of his coat, and thrust the money into his trowsers' pocket, and having received numerous thanks, bows, and wishes from Potapitsch, the latter withdrew to his home, and the conversation between

the three merchants resumed again its interrupted thread.

The scene I have just described excited Ivan Vassilievitsch's curiosity to the highest degree.

"Permit me to ask," he said, approaching the merchants, and addressing the grey-haired, "is he a relative of yours?"

"Who, sir?"

"The man who just left the room."

"No, sir. He is, as far as I know, a tradesman in this borough."

"Is he a correspondent of yours?"

"No, sir. I hardly think he even understands how to write."

"Why does he not send his money by post?"

"Probably to save the postage."

"But how is it he did not ask you for a receipt for the money?"

The red and the dark-haired merchants burst out laughing; the grey-haired got into a passion.

"A receipt!" he cried out, furiously, "a receipt! I would have broken his jaw with his own money had he dared to ask me for a receipt. I have been a merchant now more than fifty years, and I have never yet been insulted by being asked to give a receipt."

“You see, sir,” said the red-haired merchant, “it is only with noblemen that such things as receipts and bills of exchange exist. We commercial people do not make use of them. Our simple word suffices. We have no time to spare for writing. For instance, sir: here is Sidor Avdeievitsch, who has millions of roubles in his trade, and his whole writing consists of a few scraps of paper, for memory’s sake, sir.”

“I don’t understand that,” interrupted Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“How could you, sir? It is mere commercial business, without plan or *façade*. We ourselves learn it from our childhood: first as errand-boys, then as clerks, till we become partners in the business. I confess it is hard work.

“It is a bad thing,” he continued, “when one of us wants to rise into the nobility; when he marries his daughter to a prince, or a count, and neglects his comrades. From such a one thousands of receipts would be of no use. But as long as one wears such a coat, for instance, as mine, which has seen eleven years service upon my shoulders, there is no need for useless documents and papers.”

Ivan Vassilievitsch was quite perplexed. Occu-

pying himself, whilst in foreign countries, with the future destiny of Russia, he of course had not omitted to meditate over schemes of commerce, that great lever of national prosperity. However, in the absence of true notions, he had formed for himself about Russian commerce certain Utopian ideas, disproportioned to the reality and incongruent with the character of the nation. Here, as in everything else, in the bustle of his turbulent imagination, he sometimes approached reality, sometimes overreached it, and sometimes decidedly committed great blunders. He treated every subject vehemently, but superficially, because he never gave himself the trouble and the necessary time to study the subject profoundly.

“Allow me a few words,” he said with fervour. “It appears to me, that we have in Russia a great number of persons buying and selling, but yet I must say we have no systematic commerce. For commerce, science and learning are indispensable; a conflux of civilised men, clever mathematical calculations—but not, as seems to be the case with you, dependence upon mere chance. You earn millions, because you convert the consumer into a victim, against whom every kind of cheat is pardonable, and then you lay by

farthing by farthing, refusing yourselves not only all the enjoyments of life, but even the most necessary comforts. You have before your eyes only the gain of the present moment ; you dread competition ; you do not care a whit about public benefit. Your only endeavour is—to buy cheap and to sell dear. In private life you'll not take unlawfully the least trifle from a stranger, yet as merchants you are ready to strip naked your own brother. Honesty, according to your notions, is divided into two branches : in one you call the deviation from it—cheat ; in the other—profit ; and thus commerce in your hands becomes robbery and no exchange. The great mass of consumers suffer from it, and the whole country must, in fact, become destitute in enriching one single covetous class.”

“For Heaven’s sake, sir ! ” exclaimed the red-haired merchant, “you do not take us for lawyers, I hope ? ”

“For much worse than lawyers. They get voluntary bribes—you take bribes by force. You brag of your threadbare clothes ; but surely this extreme parsimony is a thousand times more blameable than the opposite prodigality of those of your comrades who spend their time amongst gipsies,

and their money in feasting. You boast of your ignorance, because you do not know what civilisation is. Civilisation, according to your notions, consists in shorter laps of a coat, foreign furniture, bronzes and champagne—in a word, in outward trifles and silly customs. Trust me, not such is civilisation. It will not shave off your beards or cut short the laps of your coats, but it will show you that cheats are cheats, in whatever garb you may clothe them; civilisation will instruct you in sciences, indispensable for yourselves; it will give you true notions of different localities and their different wants; it will make you expert in calculation, navigation, and all kinds of speculation—not founded upon peaceful robbery, but on the true conditions of general benefit. Great benefits are obtained by great means, by concentration of strength. Unite yourselves! Be it your vocation to lay open all the hidden riches of our great country; to diffuse life and vigour into all its veins; to take the whole management of its material interests into your hands. Unite your endeavours in this beautiful deed, and you may be certain of success! Why should Russia be worse than England? Comprehend only your calling; let the beam of civilisation fall upon you, and

your love for your fatherland will strengthen such a union ; and you will see that not only the whole of Russia, but even the whole world will be in your hands.”

At this eloquent conclusion, the red and the dark-haired merchants opened wide their eyes. They, of course, did not understand a single word of Ivan Vassilievitsch’s speech.

The grey-haired seemed to hesitate on something.

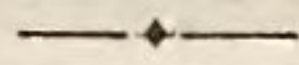
“It is possible,” he said, after a short pause, “that some of your remarks may be, though fierce, yet just. But we are no scholars, sir ; we cannot understand such clever things. No, sir, I think the old order is surer than the one you speak of. Our fathers, thank God, found means to leave us capital, and we work hard, and shall, with God’s help, do the same for our children : may they, by-and-bye, do as they please.—A cup of tea, sir ? ”

“No, thank you.”

“One cup ; do, sir.”

“No, indeed, thank you.”

CHAPTER XV.



A VILLAGE FAIR.

MEANWHILE Ivan Vassilievitsch was in the deepest despondency. Decidedly, no "*Impressions*" of any kind whatever offered themselves. In vain did he look at both sides of the tarantas. All that surrounded him flowed together into one dim, uniform picture. It was not his fault entirely however. Generally, objects define themselves in our mind more picturesquely than they prove in reality; and do we not often admire the print of anything which in nature we leave unnoticed? A peasant, for instance, in water-colours, makes you stop before him and will excite your pleasure—a peasant in reality however, uncombed, dirty and ragged, in bass-shoes and sheep-skin, will never attract the least attention, because there are so many of

them, that you leave them without taking any notice.

Be it as it may, Ivan Vassilievitsch was in a very peevish disposition. The yet untouched book for his "*Travelling Impressions*" reposed neglected at his feet in the immediate neighbourhood of the cellaret. The study of Russia, in relation to her antiquities, and her nationality, had, decidedly, not advanced one single step. What was it then, that checked our friend's plan? Ivan Vassilievitsch began to guess, that a good intention does not suffice for the accomplishment of a great deed. He found no sign-boards hanging all over Russia, by the aid of which he could read her life—what was, what is, and what shall be. A single journey to Mordassy was too little for such a study. Something more was wanting: a firm perseverance, a firm patient labour, even from childhood, through a whole life. It is necessary to penetrate into the depths of an object, when the smooth outward surface cannot reveal anything fundamental. A key had to be discovered to the least, to the most prosaic occurrence of every step. We know already that Ivan Vassilievitsch was rather a weak being: he never endeavoured to overcome the obstacles which

presented themselves; but, as soon as he met them, he changed his project. He did not gain any advantage from the different incidents, which, during his journey, could have afforded him sources for the study and meditation for which he was so much thirsting. However, he had not lost his last hope, but expected still to be able to penetrate into the profoundest mysteries of Russian nature. “Indeed,” thought he, “we busy ourselves about Russia, but we do not even know what is a Russian—a genuine Russian, without any mixture of foreign influence! What is his intellectual life? What does he expect? What does he wish? Towards what is he pressing? The pure primitive principle is so much muffled up in us by our present mode of existence, that we cannot easily distinguish those laws which are fundamental from those which are borrowed. To delineate these laws, to discover the true source of nationality — that would be a glorious task!”

As if on purpose, the tarantas, at that moment, entered a great, wealthy village, and Vassily Ivanovitsch, feeling exceedingly tired, pronounced his intention to stop a little and take some rest at the post-house.

The large, endless village appeared this day in its festive garb. Peasants of both sexes were sitting before their houses, cracking nuts. Holiday-dresses dazzled the eye in every direction. A canvass-tent of a conical form, with a branch of fir at the top, indicated the, for many a one, beloved brandy-shop. To the right stood a whole crowd of young lasses in red and blue *sarafans*, looking at two little barefooted girls playing at see-saw. At a little distance from them, a number of youths were playing at different games. In the middle of the street, a crowd of children surrounded a cart, the proprietor of which, by sundry jocose and witty sallies, was endeavouring to induce the by-standers to buy his gingerbread, cracknels, cakes, and other esculent wares. The silvery spire on the green cupola of the church rose above the houses, and delineated itself upon the grey hue of the sky.

“Hallo!” remarked Vassily Ivanovitsch to the post-inspector. “Is it a country wake?”

“Yes, sir,” the inspector answered, “it is our church’s annual festival.”

“I congratulate you, friend.”

“Thank you, sir.”

“Well—is it possible to have a tea-urn?”

“Certainly, sir, certainly! We have had five urns boiling the whole day!”

“Very good! very good!” observed Vassily Ivanovitsch.

He took three glasses of his favourite tea, and having finished this enjoyment he lost no time in getting upon the stove, where Senka had already prepared the necessary arrangements for his rest. In a very few minutes Vassily Ivanovitsch was proclaiming to all persons present in the room, that he was fast asleep. Ivan Vassilievitsch went for a lounge through the village—in search of nationality.

The whole population was out of doors, thronging in picturesque groups round the buildings. At the wine-shop two peasants were embracing heartily, assuring each other of their mutual friendship. A red-haired fellow, with a bottle in one hand and a tumbler in the other, was regaling his comrades, pursuing those who refused to be treated with sundry entreaties, and bows and compliments, quite unconscious that he was spending in one single day a whole year's savings. A woman, scarcely able to stand on her feet, was pushing her half-drunk husband towards home, shedding tears and overwhelming him with the

most bitter reproaches for his partiality to strong liquors.

Ivan Vassilievitsch hastily left this picture, so unwelcome to a civilised gentleman, and directed his steps to the group of young lasses, intending to admire the beauty of the women of the north. I must remark, that, in following up this idea of his, he adjusted his disorderly travelling costume a little, buttoned his paletot, and drew himself up.—Following the secret weakness of incurable worldly vanity, Ivan Vassilievitsch, though unconsciously, felt, however, sure of producing a most striking effect upon the gay and youthful crowd.

He was very much disappointed.

A healthy-looking, rosy-cheeked girl stared at him rather impertinently, and pointing at him with her finger, remarked to her companions:—

“Look at that licked German!”

Ivan Vassilievitsch did not think it advisable to listen to a further continuation of this conversation, of which he was evidently to be the subject, and rather offended by the contemptuous epithet of “German,” he departed from the spot in pursuance of other “*Impressions.*” He came near the church, which was surrounded by a high wall encircling a green-turf yard, upon which

many brown-coloured crosses indicated each some by-gone, humble existence. How great is the difference between a town, and a village cemetery ! At the sight of the former, you experience involuntarily a heavy, oppressive feeling ; at the sight of the latter you feel peace and you breathe freely ! The nearer life is to nature, the less does death appear dreadful—indeed, on the contrary, death then is a peaceful release from care, and not an inconsolable separation from earthly possessions !

Within the churchyard, Ivan Vassilievitsch perceived the sexton, with a small bundle in one hand and a bunch of keys in the other, hastening to open the church for the vespers ; at a short distance followed the priest in his silk robe, in a broad-brimmed hat, and with a long cane in his hand. As the latter proceeded, every peasant near whom he passed, stood up, uncovered his head, and reverently bowed to his pastor : some of them kissed his hand ; others brought their children to get his benediction. One pale, worn-looking peasant, with a short black beard and hollow eye, did not uncover his head, but remained seated and turned away somewhat disdainfully.

This incident appeared strange to Ivan Vasilievitsch. He stopped before a stout peasant, who was holding in his arms a little baby.

“Tell me, brother,” he asked, “why does that man not take his cap off before the priest?”

The peasant first covered his baby with his sheep-skin, as if to prevent him from hearing the answer :

“He is of the old creed !”

A novel idea flashed through our friend's mind. “There is an ‘Impression’ at last ! A riddle to solve !” he thought ; “to fathom the effect of schisms upon our nation ; to discover their origin, development, and aim !”

“Are there many dissenters among you ?” he asked abruptly.

“What ?”

“Are there many dissenters in your village ?”

“Dissenters ?—no, not many.”

“How many ?”

“Who knows how many there are.”

“But tell me, brother, what is their doctrine ?”

“What ?”

“What are their practices ?”

“Practices ? but—according to old books.”

“And in what do they differ from you ?”

“ In what?—they are of the old creed.”

“ I know that; have they not their peculiar service; their peculiar liturgy and their own priests?”

“ Of course they have—according to the old creed.”

“ To what sect do they belong then?”

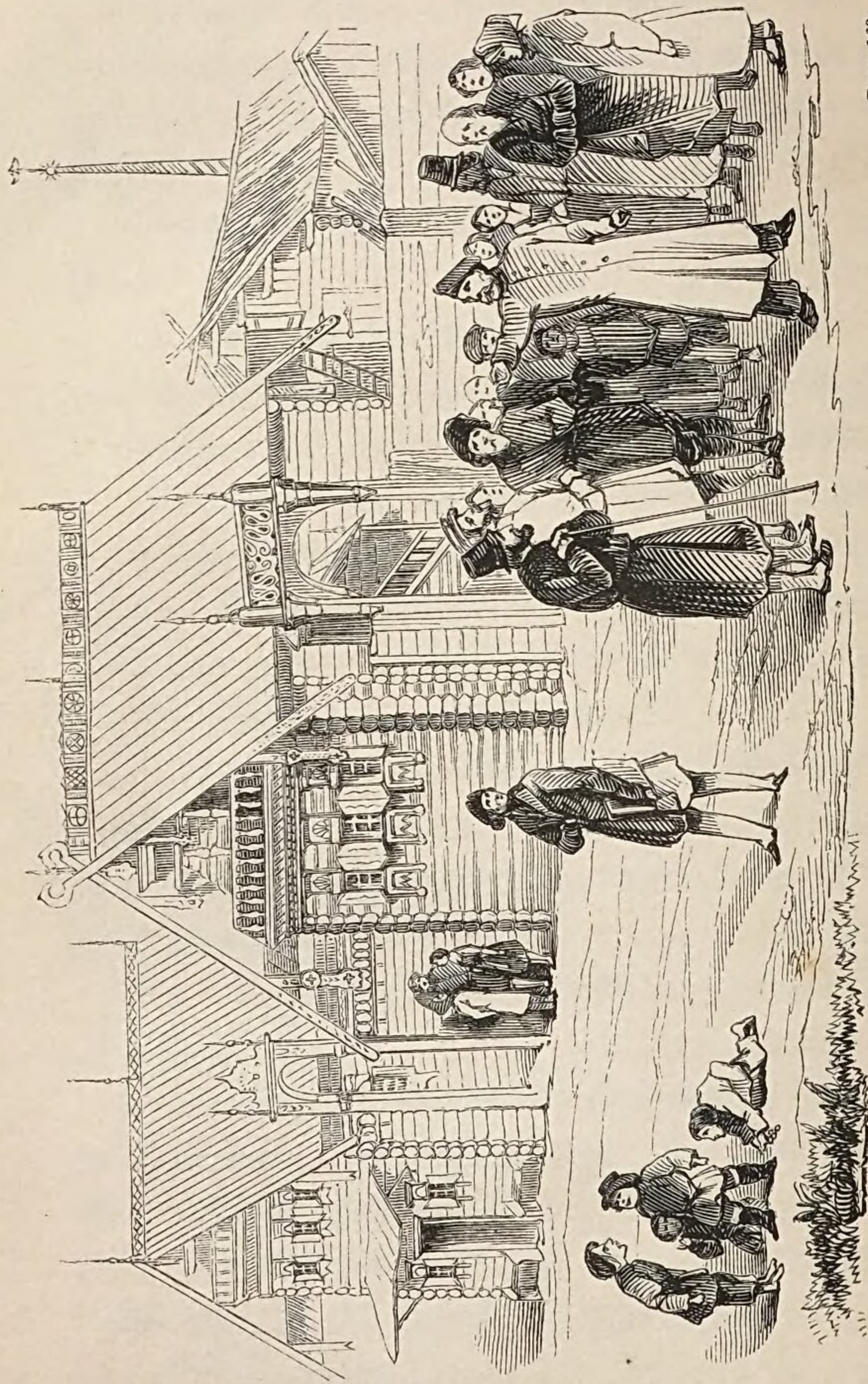
“ To what sect? Heaven knows; they don't go to church—to the old sect then, they must belong.”

“ However, I am anxious to know,” continued Ivan Vassilievitsch, reasoning aloud; “ if their religion differs from ours in the outward usages, or in substance. Is their dissent from our church a civil dissent, or an ecclesiastical?”

“ According to the old creed,” concluded the peasant, eager to put a stop to the conversation, as he turned round and disappeared through the open gateway.

Ivan Vassilievitsch pursued his promenade full of thought.

Although the peasant's *éclaircissemens* relating to dissenters were rather vague and indefinite, they still afforded some matter for meditation. Ivan Vassilievitsch walked on and thought. Suddenly a loud burst of laughter interrupted the thread of his ideas, just as they were on the point



The Old Soldier at the Fair.

of being disentangled; he lifted up his head and involuntarily stopped short. Before the entrance of a tavern stood a crowd assembled round a man in a military cap, with grey mustachios; two medals on faded ribbons, as well as the whole carriage of the narrator, denoted him to be an old veteran out of service.

“Bravo, comrade!” some one remarked in the crowd, “bravo! God help me! Where have you not been? What have you not seen?”

“Yes,” pursued the narrator, evidently under a strong influence of the day’s festival; “not like you, fellows, who remain all the year round near the stove. I have thrashed some peas in my life, and something bigger than your common peas are. Thank God, I have been against the French, and against the Turks too.”

“Indeed! against the Turks?”

“Yes, against the Turks, upon my word. It was in the year twenty-eight.”

“And pray, why were we at war with the Turks?”

“Why! it’s all well known. The Turkish Sultan, that’s how the Germans call their sovereign, he sent to our Czar a letter: ‘I want,’ says he, ‘you to give me place, to go out of my way, and

then I want you to christen your subjects in our pagan religion.”

“The blasphemer!” remarked an old man amongst the listeners.

“So he is; without the least subordination! And then, his ambassador brought to our Czar a handful of poppy-seed: ‘We shall march against your Imperial Majesty,’ said he, with insolence, ‘with just as many regiments as there are seeds here.’”

“Braggart!”

“Well, and what did our father-Czar answer?” was a question from one in the crowd.

“What he did answer?—he gave to the Turkish ambassador a handful of pepper-corns: ‘Though the number may be small,’ said our Czar, ‘try you and your Sultan, to bite them through.’”

The peasants burst into a tremendous laugh.

“Capital! capital indeed!” they exclaimed, “and did the Tartar get quieted?”

“Deuce a bit! His brains must have been out of order methinks; it was a plain Russian reply he got, but he did not understand it, though!”

“Does he live far from here—the Turk?”

“Rather farther than your orchard. We

marched, marched, and marched, some two or three months ; and such pitiful countries did we pass—nothing but mountains, as if it was God's curse for their unbelieving faith—a dreadful place ! Nothing to be got ; not a single reasonable shop. The book-learned men say the climate there is beautiful ; the deuce it is ! you must pay four copecks for a single needle ! ”

“ Where did you get to ? ” some one asked.

“ Who knows where we got to ? They have such crack-jaw names that no one can pronounce them. We got simply into Turkey.”

“ You must have had many hardships to stand ? ” inquired the former old peasant, “ perhaps often no proper night rest at all ? ”

“ What ! night rest ? Our night quarters in this cursed country were always under the blue sky. The commander gives the order to ‘ rest,’ and we help ourselves as best we can : the belly for a mattress, the back for a coverlid ; and so we slept till the drum beat. But all this would be nothing : a soldier can endure anything. What was the hardest, no *kwas** even was to be got

* A kind of small beer, of universal use in Russia by all classes. Made from rye.

anywhere in that wicked place. The devil take it!"

Saying this, the veteran spat on the ground and waved his hand disdainfully. After a short pause, in which he listened condescendingly to admiring remarks from the crowd, which his narrative had elicited.

"Good bye, friends," he said, "I am asked to have a pot of beer at the publican's," and he departed.

Ivan Vassilievitsch likewise pursued his further peregrinations.

Songs, some melancholy, others gay and boisterous, resounded from all quarters. Crowds of boys stopped before Ivan Vassilievitsch, as he passed, and stared at him with some sort of amazement. Old grey-bearded men returned home, supported by their respectful grandsons: young folks took off their caps when they happened to meet them.

Ivan Vassilievitsch walked on full of doubtful meditations.

"A strange nation," he said to himself, "an incomprehensible nation! so full of contradictions and of opposing shades, that in a whole life you cannot get to know them. Besides, a nation is

not nationality. The separate castes by themselves do not represent the general spirit. Their reciprocal conflux into *one* sentiment is necessary. There is no doubt all the classes of our society fraternise amongst themselves, but the fraternity is so little seen in the outward life that you may often doubt its existence. Where am I, then, to seek for nationality? ”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE DREAM.

It was late in the evening. The tarantas rolled along a large—very large steppe near Kazan. By degrees night spread her shades over the whole of nature.

“What does this mean?” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch with anxiety. “What is become of Vassily Ivanovitsch? Where is he? Vassily Ivanovitsch!—ay! Vassily Ivanovitsch!”

There came no answer from Vassily Ivanovitsch. Ivan Vassilievitsch rubbed his eyes.

“Strange! marvellous!” he continued, “is it an optical delusion, or something else? but the tarantas does not seem to be the tarantas any more—it is something living—a monster beetle, and he runs just like a beetle. No! now it resembles a bird. Nonsense! how is it possible? However, indeed it is a bird—a huge enormous bird, of what species I don’t know. I have never

heard of such monstrous birds ; and then, who ever thought that a tarantas could have assumed for a certain time the shape of a vehicle, but be in reality a bird ! Are you mad, Ivan Vassilievitsch ? That comes of your eternal nonsensical babbling ! Pooh ! it is dreadful ! But decidedly it is a bird.”

And Ivan Vassilievitsch was not in error. The tarantas decidedly had become a bird. Out of the box stretched a long neck ; the fore-wheels shaped themselves into claws ; the back-wheels into a broad, large tail ; feathers crept out of the pillows and beds, and dispersed themselves systematically over the whole carcass ; and the monster bird began to move from side to side, as if intending to rise into the air.

“ Gammon ! ” exclaimed Ivan Vassilievitsch, “ I won’t remain alone in the steppe, and at night too ! Thank you, tarantas ; you may assume what shape you like, but carry me you must. I still maintain that you are nothing but a tarantas.”

Here Ivan Vassilievitsch grasped with both his hands the neck of the fantastic animal ; he fixed himself firmly a-straddle and awaited, not without considerable anguish, what was to follow.

And the strange bird—no eagle, no turkey—began to move. It extended its long neck, shook

itself, and moving its monstrous wings, up it flew into the air.

Ivan Vassilievitsch felt very uneasy.

“At last I have obtained an *impression*,” he thought; “but what a silly, stupid impression it is!” I was eagerly looking for something contemporaneous, national and living; and after all my long, vain hopes, I get into a fantastic scrape! I hate intensely all that is fantastic! I detest all imitation, and everything warmed up! It is provoking! My whole life I am seeking truth, and am doomed to find only nonsense!”

In the meanwhile the darkness grew pitch-black; the air was quite suffocating. A sepulchral dampness threw Ivan Vassilievitsch into a fever. Little by little he began to feel as if a heavy vault came closer and closer above him—as if he was flying through a narrow cavern. And it was really a narrow, dark cavern. He was quite horrified!

“Tarantas!” he exclaimed in a piteous voice, “good tarantas! darling tarantas! I believe thou art a bird: help me only out of this place!—save me! I’ll never forget your service!”

The tarantas flew on.

Suddenly through an aperture of the dark

cavern appeared a little red flame, and before it were moving dreadful shadows. Bodies without heads, hung round with all imaginable instruments of torture, walked solemnly in pairs, bowing slowly to the right and to the left ; there was no end to the bloody procession.

“ Good tarantas ! beautiful bird ! ” cried Ivan Vassilievitsch, “ I am in a trance ! Listen to me ! help me ! I ’ll feed thee !—I ’ll repair thee ! Only bring me safe away from here ! ”

The tarantas flew on.

The decapitated shadows disappeared, and again came the former dark cavern. Some time passed in the suffocating darkness, when Ivan Vassilievitsch suddenly heard a distant buzz. The tarantas turned rapidly round a corner. The whole cavern, in one moment, was lighted with a light yellow flame, and a new spectacle astonished the fearful rider. A huge bear was sitting on a stone, and playing a dancing tune on a *balalaika*. Hideous figures whistling, laughing and shrieking, jumped around the musician in most ungraceful movements : it was disgusting to look at them. Such faces ! such figures ! Rooks in uniforms ; bats with spectacles ; dandies with a visiting card instead of features ; children with enormous dried-

up skulls ; women with mustachios and in jack-boots : powdered monkeys in new-fashioned coats ; kites with embroidered coat collars and small swords ; asses with beards ; brooms in morocco binding, with gilt edges ; babies on crutches ; pigs, toads, rats—every one and every thing jumped, squeaked, whistled, laughed, and shrieked with such vehemence that the vaults of the cavern shook to their very foundations, as if dreading the infernal bacchanalia of the revelling monsters.

“Tarantas !” begged Ivan Vassilievitsch. “Good tarantas ! I beseech thee in the name of Vassily Ivanovitsch and Avdotia Petrovna, do not let me perish in this way ! Consider my young age ! Help me, dear, dear tarantas !”

The tarantas flew on.

“There he is ! There is Ivan Vassilievitsch !” a voice exclaimed from the dancing groups. “Ivan Vassilievitsch ! Ivan Vassilievitsch !” now shouted the whole multitude. “At last we have got you ! Let us have him now ! We’ll teach him now, the rascal ! You want to learn ? We’ll enlighten you presently ! Let us have him, the civiliser ! Take hold of the fellow !”

“Police ! Murder !” exclaimed Ivan Vassilievitsch in despair.

The good tarantas saw the danger. He moved his wings with more force and doubled the quickness of his progress. Ivan Vassilievitsch shut his eyes, and, half-dead with fear, tried to clench closer to his hippogriff. He felt already the touch of shaggy paws, of sharp claws; the burning, poisonous breath of the infernal crowd scorched his back and shoulders. However, the tarantas flew boldly on—he gains in advance of his persecutors—he leaves them far behind. The yellow flame begins to disappear by degrees; the infernal noise weakens, till it becomes again but a distant, indistinct buzz, and at last is heard no more.

Ivan Vassilievitsch now opens his eyes. All around him is dark, but a gust of fresh air raises his fallen spirits. The vault gets broader and wider till by degrees it melts together into the transparent atmosphere. Ivan Vassilievitsch felt as if he was released from a painful captivity, and he remarked that the tarantas flew high, very high in the air.

A sudden sun-beam pierced from the horizon like a flash of lightning, and the outlines of earth began to be distinct. Ivan Vassilievitsch looked on with surprise: beneath him lay in a beautiful

panorama an immeasurable space, becoming distincter and clearer as the day's luminary rose higher: seven seas, covered with numberless sails; a chain of mountains, glittering with gold, bound together with iron, extended from north to south, from west to east; large rivers, like vital arteries, interlacing and meandering in all directions, dispersed wealth and life along their whole course; dense forests scattered between them; fields, loaded with crops, waving their heavy ears in the morning breeze; towns, villages, and hamlets appeared everywhere like bright stars, and ribbons of roads showed the way from one to another. Ivan Vassilievitsch's heart throbbed.

It was now quite daylight. The whole immeasurable space, as if by magic, got at once enlivened; every being and every thing at the same moment, got the spark of life. Labourers covered the fields and meadows; steamers and other craft swarmed on the wide rivers, carrying everywhere with them wealth and comfort. Ivan Vassilievitsch held his breath. He was now fast descending towards earth, and, by degrees, the tarantas began to change his bird-shape into a more proper one: his neck again became a box, his claws and tail, wheels. The tarantas was

again a tarantas—but how different from the former!—he looked so elegant, so smooth and well-shaped! quite a dandy! the mat-bags, bonnet boxes, and hampers, tied up with ropes and strings, were superseded by well-made coffers and portmanteaus, strapped ingeniously to proper places. The tarantas, in a word, was new-born—quite young again. No vestige of its former untidiness; a certain feeling of self-dependence and self-respect, aye, of pride, gave to its gait perfect security.

“How splendidly Vassily Ivanovitsch has repaired him!” involuntarily thought Ivan Vassilievitsch to himself. “Although it is a monstrous long vehicle, it is however very safe for travelling; and then—so original! I must indeed thank Vassily Ivanovitsch for the improvement!—but where is he indeed? Vassily Ivanovitsch! Vassily Ivanovitsch!—where are you? No answer. We must have dropped him somewhere! Poor fellow! he was a kind-hearted old man, upon my soul!”

The tarantas was now pursuing its way on a road as smooth as a mirror. The country it passed seemed familiar to Ivan Vassilievitsch—as if he had travelled already through it:

everything however had another aspect. Where he had seen dreary bogs, there he saw now cultivated land, swarming with people, full of life and activity; the once impenetrable forests are cleared up and preserved like a national treasure; beautiful cattle pasture on emerald-green steppes. On all sides and in every direction he sees abundance, labour, civilisation. The villages he passed by, were evidently Russian villages; they had preserved their primitive appearance of old, but they looked so very clean and tidy; the smoky huts, the thatched roofs had disappeared, and instead, pretty-looking houses, covered with iron and ornamented with carved wood-work, adorned both sides of the high-road. He did not encounter a single drunken man, not a single beggar. For the aged and the helpless, asylums were built close by the village church—besides, there were hospitals and schools—schools for all children, without distinction of class. The towns, through which Ivan Vassilievitsch passed, were equally familiar to him, though, in many respects, he found them immensely changed: the streets were no more dreary deserts; there were no houses with cracked walls, broken window-panes, and dirty shops. Quite the contrary—it

was easy to guess, by the outward look of the buildings, in how orderly a manner their dwellers spent their lives.

A whole forest of gilt cupolas and steeples, a whole country of palaces and mansions now presented itself to Ivan Vassilievitsch's view. "Moscow! Moscow!" he exclaimed in ecstasy; and in a twinkling of the eye the tarantas disappeared, and Ivan Vassilievitsch found himself on the Tverskoy boulevard, and at the same identical spot, where, but a few days ago, he had met Vassily Ivanovitsch, and agreed to accompany him to Mordassy. Ivan Vassilievitsch felt as if bewitched. Aged lime-trees spread their branches over the crowded walks; on both sides of the boulevard, palaces of a light, beautiful architecture proclaimed the cultivation of the arts; every building was like a temple of art, and not an exhibition of silly luxury!

"Is it possible!" Ivan Vassilievitsch exclaimed, and stopped short. He thought he saw the prince, the same whom he had once met on the highroad to Kazan; the same who spent his whole life abroad, and only came to Russia to collect the rent from his estates. Is it possible that it is really the prince? he must be in foreign

countries ; and besides, what a costume he wears ! as if he came from a bal-masqué ! ”

But it was in reality the prince ; not in the same shape as Ivan Vassilievitsch knew him in former times. He had on his head a beaver-cap ; his waist was bound in a fur-coat lined with sable, and yellow morocco-boots proclaimed, according to old custom, his noble rank. The prince recognised Ivan Vassilievitsch, and politely welcomed him.

“ How are you, my old friend ? ” he said.

“ What, prince ! is it you indeed ? I should never have known you in this strange dress ! ”

“ Why so ? Is this dress not appropriate to our northern country, and besides, it is our national costume. I don’t wear any other.”

“ I beg your pardon ; I did not know it. I thought prince, you were in foreign countries ? ”

“ In what foreign countries ? ”

“ In the west, I mean.”

“ What for ? ”

“ But so.”

“ Have we not our own west, our own east, north, and south ? If one is determined to travel, there is space enough to do so during a whole life ! ”

“Certainly, prince, it is so. You must however agree, that in foreign countries we gain, in addition to the pleasures of a voyage, such instruction as——”

The prince looked at Ivan Vassilievitsch with surprise.

“What instruction?” he asked.

“But we meet with models of civilisation and liberty.”

The prince burst out laughing. “Heaven preserve me—what words you make use of; we are no children, sir, to pass our time with charades and to take names for things. However, I am glad to perceive that you have studied history—it is a laudable occupation! You are speaking of a time, when unasked criers were clamouring over the destinies of nations—less for national benefit than to make their voices heard; but some considerable time has now elapsed since all nations have discovered that all the noise that was made had served only to mantle petty passions, party calculations, and personal interests; and believe me, if common welfare has made any progress, it is by its own power, and not by loud clamouring. Passions of any kind are detrimental to human things. Look into history—and what

is history, but an instruction from the past, to enable the present to guide the future? We were the latest, and the most in arrear of all nations, but by the aid of history we escaped all juvenile blunders; we advanced steadily and safely, with faith, with submission, and hopefulness; we did not make much noise; we did not shed blood; we were not trying to escape a lawful authority, but were thronging towards one holy aim;—and we have attained this aim, and have displayed it to all the world. Our patience has solved a riddle, a very simple riddle though, but one which, till our time, no other nation understood! We have proved to the whole universe, that liberty and civilisation are one and inseparable, and that this unity is nothing else than the discharge, by every individual, of the duties he has to perform.”

“ You are joking, prince.”

“ Heaven forbid! People have cried a good deal about their rights, but very little about their duties. We pursued the opposite course: we did our duty, and our rights constituted themselves, as a matter of course.”

“ But how was this effected?”

“ Quite simply: by obedience and giving in to the advancement of the age, and not by racing.

We sought the possible, and not the unattainable; we separated the human from the ideal; we tried to combine our various elements, and not to drive them still more asunder by passionate movements. We wanted an equilibrium, as that alone can give safety to the world, and we found it in love. In Christian love it is that lies the peace of the state, the happiness of a family—all the beatitude that we may expect and pray for to Heaven.”

“And did you not encounter obstacles?” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“Without obstacles there can be no success. It was in the same love that we found the will, strength, and perseverance to conquer adverse principles; it was in the same love that all classes of our society united for the accomplishment of our nation’s progress. We have got the victory over the evils of the west and the evils of the east, and Russia now stands high—so high as to dominate the whole world, less by her colossal power than by her spiritual, high moral influence.”

“I perceive,” remarked Ivan Vassilievitsch, “you are still an aristocrat.”

The prince smiled and shrugged his shoulders.

“Again empty words! It is lucky for you that we are good friends, and that I shall not repeat

to any one your remark. But I must caution you not to speak any more about silly distinctions between aristocrats and democrats; people will laugh at you. Now-a-days distinction lies in merits, and not in names. An idler, stuck up with assumed arrogance, is despised as much as a bilious grudger of other men's merits and success. Is not greedy beggarly jealousy as bad as arrogant wealth? I am, it is true, an aristocrat as concerns my patronage of any improvement—any genuine merit; but I am a democrat because I see in every man a brother; and you may easily perceive that both my qualifications are so closely connected that they express the same idea.”

“It seems he has grown a pedant,” thought Ivan Vassilievitsch to himself: “he must, since I saw him, have indulged greatly in German philosophy: philosophy is rather the fashion in Moscow: he has become a sage from tediousness.”

Ivan Vassilievitsch pursued the conversation.

“And how do you pass your time, prince?” he asked: “Do you play your daily game at cards?”

“What a bad joke!” replied the prince, rather offended: “it's only our valets who play now at cards, and we dismiss them when we find it out.

As for ourselves, we have, thank God, better occupations. We work. An idle man does not deserve the denomination of man. After our day's work I go to the club."

"To the English Club?"

"No,—to the Russian. I meet there all our learned men; and listening to their conversation, I every day learn something new. Would you believe it?—all our gigantic enterprises, all the improvements which we are gradually undergoing, sprung out from this source of friendly intercourse."

"Are you constantly residing in Moscow, prince?"

"No. I now and then come for a short time to Moscow. My service keeps me generally in my district."

"Do you serve, prince?"

"Yes, I do. I am assessor in the district court."

Ivan Vassilievitsch burst into a tremendous laugh.

"What are you laughing at?"

"But, prince, how is it possible you should expect me to believe that you, with your wealth, with your name—"

"These are just the reasons why I serve. In

the first instance, as a citizen I must devote a part of my time to public business ; secondly, my own interests as a wealthy proprietor are strongly united with the interests of the country ; and lastly, by my serving I leave to some other man, who has, pecuniarily, a better business, his whole time to devote to it. Besides, I help Government to preserve itself against unconscientious bribe-takers."

"Are you often in the chief town of your Government ? "

"Sometimes on business, sometimes for pleasure. You must come to see us : you will find much that is interesting ; many antiquities ; many objects of art ; besides quite gigantic establishments of industry and commerce. You must come to see us ; and then I shall receive you at my ancestral castle : you will be delighted with it, I am sure ! "

"I can imagine what it must be," interrupted Ivan Vassilievitsch. "If luxury has made in Russia the same progress as everything else I see and hear of, your castle must be quite fairy-like. I am sure you change your furniture at least once a-year ? "

"Heaven preserve me ! My castle, as it now

is, has stood unaltered for many centuries. All the traces of my forefathers were ever strictly and devoutly preserved : it is like a monument of all their actions ! Their memory does not get effaced, but passes from generation to generation, urging the living to follow the example of the dead, and to sustain properly the spotlessness of the race. All our old castles offer a great deal of useful information, and of genuine æsthetic entertainment. I have, for instance, a splendid gallery of pictures.”

“Are they of the Italian school ?” asked Ivan Vassilievitsch.

“No,—of the Arzamas* school : magnificent master-pieces of Arzamas artists there are indeed !”

“Hallo !” thought Ivan Vassilievitsch to himself.

“My library, too, is worth seeing.”

“Chiefly foreign literature, of course ?”

“Quite the contrary. Of foreign literature you will find only those few genial productions which are become the property of humanity at large. The greatest part of my library consists of

* A town in the Government Nishny-Novgorod, where a great number of common prints and engravings are manufactured, and from there sent to all parts of the empire.

the productions of our Russian classic authors, and of a whole collection of periodicals, which assists the nation on her path towards civilisation, and by their success are become objects of general respect and gratitude. And it is astonishing how the perusal, in every class of society, of these periodicals and journals, proves how thankful we are to them. There is hardly a hut to be found where you may not see a sheet of the 'Northern Bee,' or a volume of the 'National Records.' Our authors are the honour and glory of the country. There is so much conscientiousness, so much disinterestedness and attraction in their writings, that you involuntarily rejoice at their high and flattering position in society. But, pray, where is Vassily Ivanovitsch at present?" the prince suddenly asked.

Ivan Vassilievitsch felt quite perplexed at this sudden question; he had forgotten entirely everything about Vassily Ivanovitsch.

"Do you know him?" he asked the prince, somewhat stuttering.

"I knew him when I was very young, but it is long since I have seen him. He was not very clever in talking, but was, nevertheless, a capital matter-of-fact man. If every one had been like

him, without any civilisation at all, I am certain our nation would have advanced quicker than it did—it was the half-civilised criers who checked us so much, those who had heard about something or other, but did not understand anything! Give my compliments to Vassily Ivanovitsch when you happen to see him, pray! And now good bye, dear friend, I must leave you. Good bye!”

The prince shook hands with Ivan Vassilievitsch and disappeared, leaving him in profound perplexity.

“Have I found nationality?” Ivan Vassilievitsch asked himself.

“Vania! Vania!” some one shouted behind.

Ivan Vassilievitsch turned round and found himself in the arms of his school-comrade, the same he had once met on the boulevard at Vladimir.

“Vania, how do you come here?” the latter asked with a friendly surprise.

“I don’t know myself,” Ivan Vassilievitsch answered.

“Come along to my house. My wife will be delighted to make your acquaintance. I have so often talked to her about the happy time when at

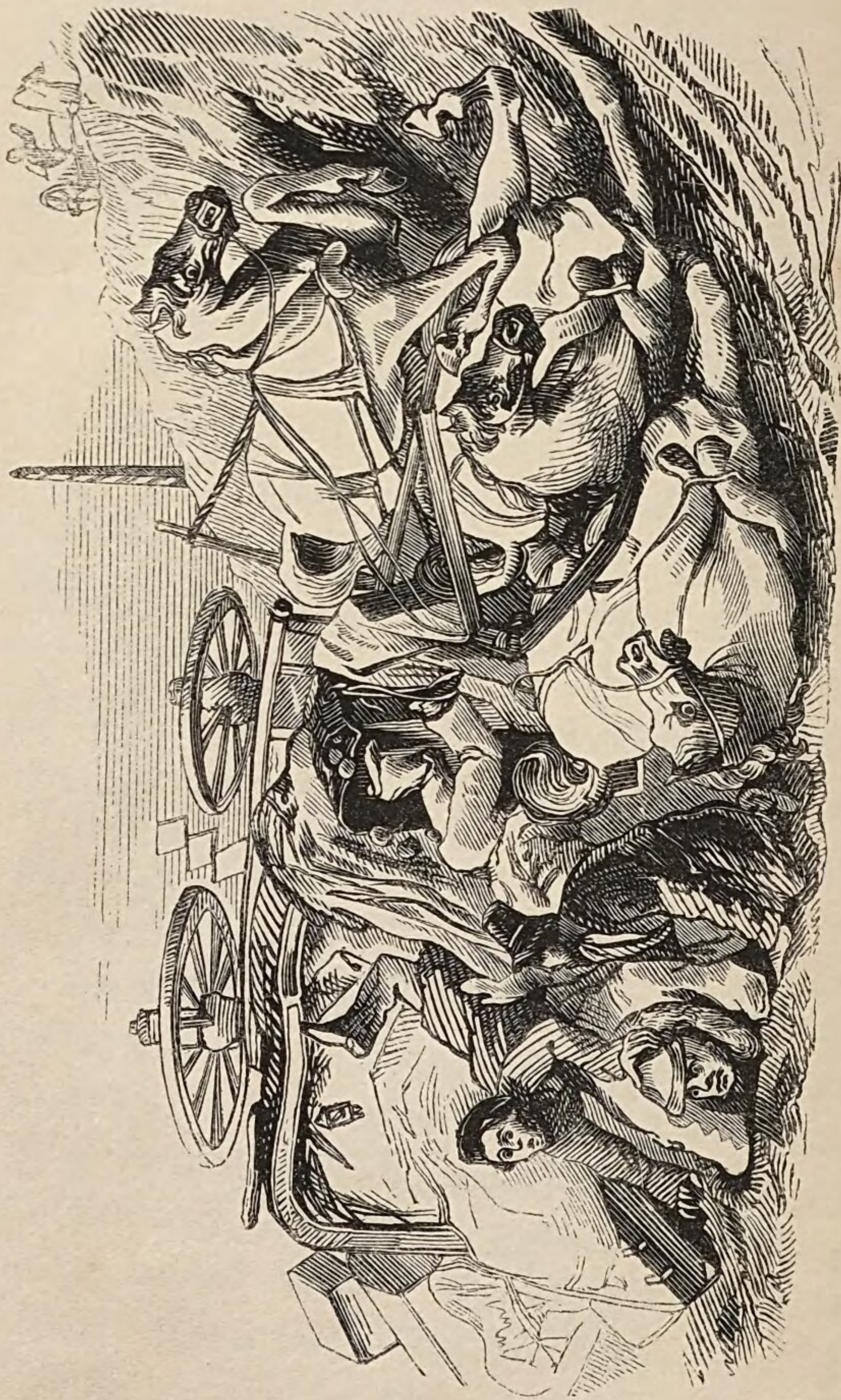
school, seated on the same form, we were studying so assiduously, listening with so much eagerness to the lectures of our learned professors."

"You are jesting," said Ivan Vassilievitsch.

"How can I forget that time, dear friend? How can I but be thankful to these men? It is to them that I owe both my spiritual quiet and my material happiness! Am I not rich, because they have taught me to be moderate in my wishes? Am I not indebted to them for my being always occupied—never idle? I seek no amusements, because I find diversion in my family, whose comfort and happiness constitutes my whole luxury! All that, I am indebted for to these worthies, who have led me in my youth! But come along!"

They walked off.

Everything in the house of Ivan Vassilievitsch's friend was comfortable, though simple and unpretending, but the smallest trifle was distinguished by an artistic selection; everything reflected the indescribable light of the presence of a young and beautiful woman. She welcomed Ivan Vassilievitsch with a smiling friendliness, as if she had known him for many, many years, and he



The Upset.

stopped in devout admiration before her. It seemed to him as if, till then, he had never seen a woman. She was not beautiful with that beauty that troubles the passionate dreams of youth; her whole being was an ideal of the highest peace, of the most poetical quietude. Her soul looked through her eyes; her heart spoke through her lips. Her childlike features expressed such a kind-heartedness, such profound and holy love, that any man in looking at her, must involuntarily become a better man! Two rosy-cheeked children, at the view of the stranger, pressed their curly little heads to her knees.

Ivan Vassilievitsch viewed this picture as if it were a relic, and he felt that he had before him the brightest illustration of the highest reward for man's toils, labours and sorrows. How long he stopped before this scene he was unconscious; he did not hear a single word that was said to him, but his heart felt wider and wider; all his feelings concentrated themselves into one of quiet beatitude; all his thoughts into a prayer.

“There is happiness on earth,” he exclaimed, with enthusiasm; “there is an aim in life worth labouring for, and——”

“Help! help! we fall! help!”

Ivan Vassilievitsch suddenly felt a severe shock and falling with his whole weight against some hard body, he awoke from the heavy blow.

“What is that? what is the matter?”

“Help me! help me!” cried Vassily Ivanovitsch; “who would ever have thought it possible that the tarantas could upset!”

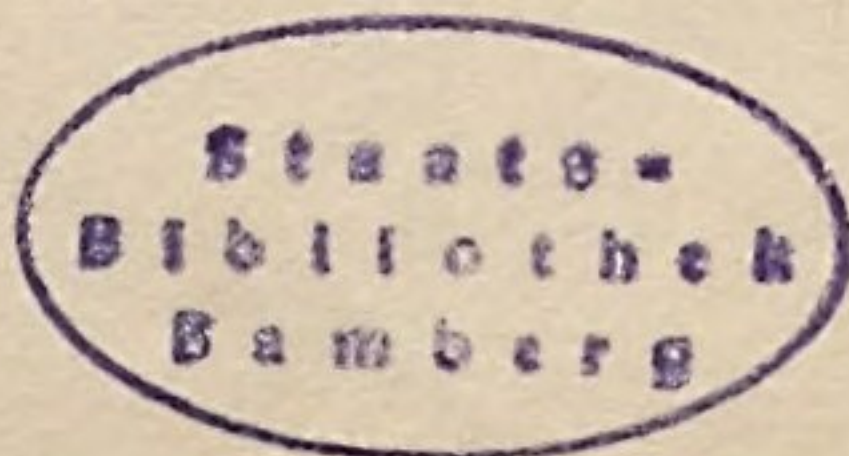
Indeed, the tarantas was lying down in a ditch, upside down. Under the tarantas lay Ivan Vassilievitsch, almost stunned by the unexpected fall; under him lay Vassily Ivanovitsch, more stunned by the possibility of the tarantas upsetting. The morocco-book for the “*Travelling Impressions*” was for ever buried in the thick mud of the ditch. Senka was hanging from the box, his foot having got entangled in a rope.

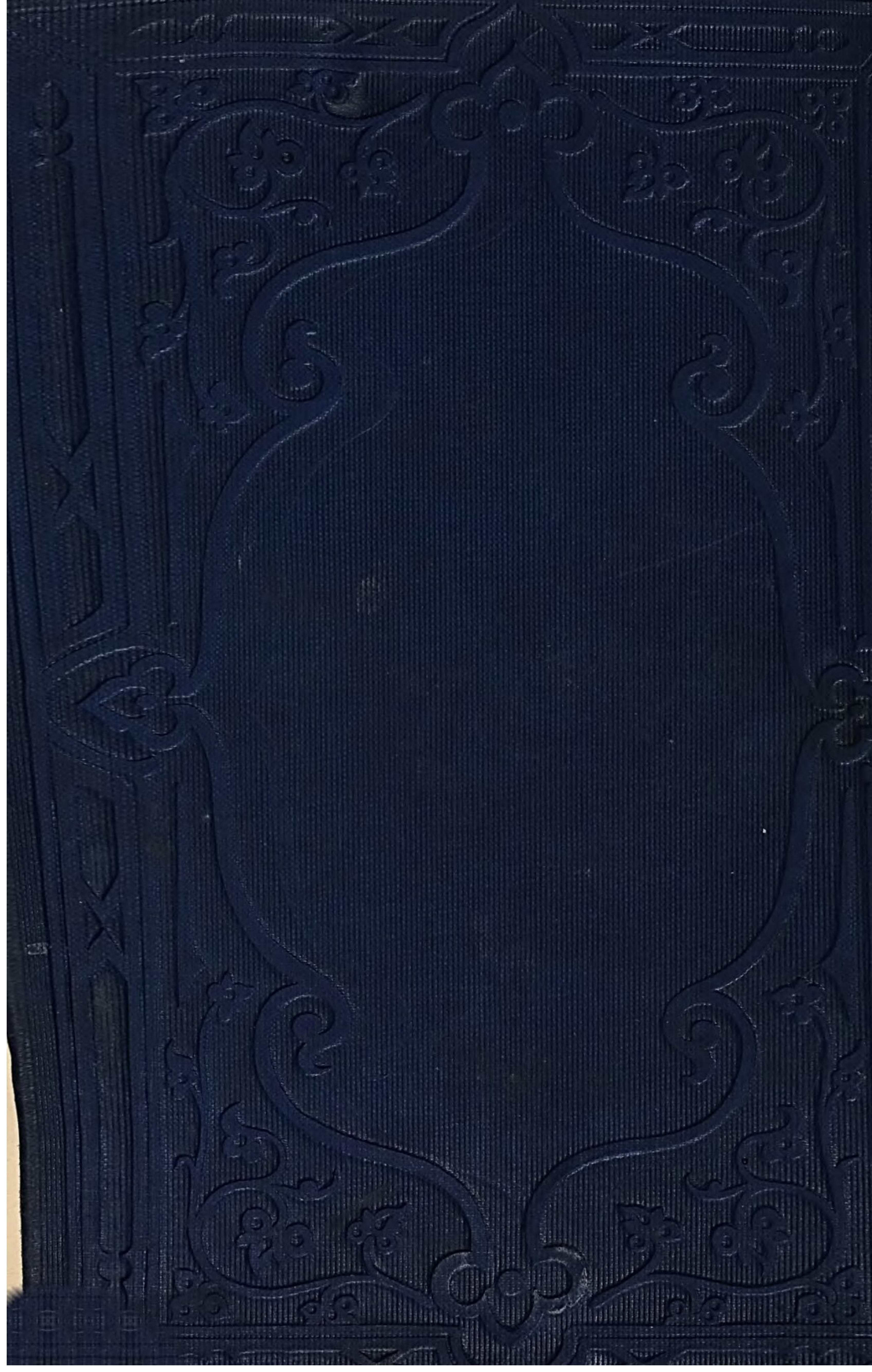
The yamtchik was the first to resume his perpendicular position; he looked around to see if there was any help near at hand, and then consoled the still astonished Vassily Ivanovitsch, by saying pathetically:

“It’s nothing, your honour—never mind it, sir!”

THE END.

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Sollogub, Vladimir A.

<<The>> Tarantas travelling impressions of young Russia

London 1850

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